Minutes of the Sixty-Fifth Meeting
Central Committee of the World Council of Churches
23-29 June 2021
Video Conference

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1. 23 June Plenary

The moderator of the central committee, Dr Agnes Abuom (Anglican Church of Kenya), called the 65th meeting of the World Council of Churches (WCC) central committee to order.

She wished the participants good morning, good evening and good day, welcoming all to the first online meeting of the WCC central committee. She expressed thanks for God's grace which allowed the central committee to finally meet after a long time – since the last meeting in June 2018.

On behalf of the leadership of the central committee (LCC), she also welcomed the former general secretary, Rt Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, presiding bishop of the Church of Norway, who would share a reflection during the opening prayer.

1.1. Opening Prayer

She invited Rev. Dr Mikie Roberts, programme executive for spiritual life, to lead the opening prayer. Several central committee members participated through the reading of scripture and intercessions. For this week the ecumenical prayer cycle is focused on praying with and for the people and churches in Malawi and Zambia. The prayer was based on the assembly theme: Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity. Scripture readings were from Psalm 85 and 2 Corinthians 5:11-21.

Rt Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit reflected on the text from the letter to the Corinthians and the impact of the current pandemic situation facing the world.

He mourned the loss of life as a result of the virus – in the world, in the WCC member churches, members of the central committee and other co-workers in the ecumenical movement, and in the families of those present. He urged the listeners not to lose heart "for we walk by faith, not by sight" (5:7). The way forward is found by believing more than what we see.

Highlighting the assembly theme and the need of the world for what only Christ can give – reconciliation with God, nothing less. The fellowship of churches is connected through the love of Christ, and therefore can be so much more than what we are by ourselves. Therefore, the Church needs to be moved by, even controlled by and compelled by Christ's love.

He concluded his reflection by thanking the central committee for the many encounters, meetings and visits that brought him into the reality of the lives of the churches – experiences of Christ's love! – as well as the struggles, and inspired ministry of reconciliation in so many contexts.

The prayer concluded with the Lord's Prayer, prayed in the different languages of the participants.

The moderator thanked all who participated in the opening prayer.

1.2. Agenda and Conduct of Meeting

Dr Agnes Abuom moderated a decision session.

Mr Doug Chial, director in the office of the general secretariat, was invited to go through the agenda and the conduct of meeting for the video conference.

He explained that the annotated agenda includes the day-by-day agenda of the central committee and Zoom links for every meeting. All of the times referred to are central European time or Geneva time. The agenda includes links to the documentation and discussion site.

Because this is the first online central committee, the executive committee prepared a limited agenda focussed on strengthening the fellowship, preparing for the assembly and addressing issues related to membership. The central committee is also asked to extend the WCC strategic plan to include 2022.

The agenda includes plenary sessions for information, hearing and decision. The regional meetings each would take place at a different time on Thursday. Every region would have the chance to share in plenary the following week. The standing committees of the central committee meet on Friday and Saturday. Each committee begins and ends with a common prayer for every committee. On Monday and Tuesday the committees will present their reports for hearing and decision-making.

A central committee meeting normally involves 400 people. This central committee includes participants who must be present and partners that "shall" be invited according to the WCC rules. The leadership of the central committee is moderating the meeting. The members and presidents have the right to speak and to participate in decision-making. Advisors have the right to speak and will join regional meetings and standing committees.

He informed the house that there were 26 young people involved in the meeting as stewards. They were not helping to run the meeting, but for ecumenical formation. They would join plenaries and regional meetings. The consensus consultant for the meeting is Mr Georges Lemopoulos (Ecumenical Patriarchate).

The central committee was prepared in accordance with WCC rule 8.8, which provides for meetings using electronic communication. Like in all meetings of the WCC, we are using procedures for decision making by consensus. The conduct for WCC meetings is described in Rule 19, adapted for use during a video conference. Members and participants were encouraged to contribute to the discussion by using the chat.

Dr Abuom added that decisions would be taken by consensus and that, because of the time constraints, members would only be allowed to speak briefly.

1.3. Opening Actions

Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca, acting general secretary, was invited to proceed with the roll call and the seating of substitutes. Since a traditional roll call would take too long, he confirmed that a quorum had been reached with 124 members and presidents confirmed as present. He referred the committee to the Participants List (INF 02) for the approval of substitutes and replacements.

The substitutes and replacements were <u>agreed by consensus</u>.
The agenda for the meeting was <u>approved by consensus</u>.
With regard to the standing committee membership, proposed in GEN 04, the moderator explained that the standing committees for this central committee meeting would include:

- Communications
- Finance Policy
- Governance and Nominations
- Policy Reference and
- Programme

For this meeting, there would be no Public Issues committee. The executive committee felt that there would not be enough time to process public statements. Because of the nature of the meeting, members of the public issues committee have been distributed to the other committees for this meeting. Any request for changes in standing committee membership should be sent to the secretariat.

The standing committee membership was approved by consensus.

The minutes of the June 2018 central committee meeting had been posted on the documentation site in January 2020. No comments or corrections were received from the central committee members.

The minutes of the 64th meeting of the central committee, June 2018, were approved by consensus.

The opening actions were completed and Dr Abuom asked the vice-moderator of the central committee, H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr Gennadios of Sassima (Ecumenical Patriarchate), to moderate the session presenting the moderator's address, the report of the executive committee and the report of the acting general secretary.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios moderated a hearing session and invited the moderator to present her address.

1.4. Moderator's Address

Dr Abuom spoke of the promise of the ecumenical historical legacy in light of the COVID-19 pandemic as a sign of encouragement and a gift to propel us forward. The global church is coping with the impact of COVID-19 pandemic relying on their spiritual staying power amidst very hostile and life-threatening conditions. The motto of the first assembly of the World Council of Churches, namely, "we are committed to stay together", no matter the challenges, still speaks to the fellowship and the world today. The challenges facing our churches and communities and the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the fellowship of churches bear some resemblance with the era of the founding of the WCC. The historical ecumenical legacy provides lessons to draw from as we seek to keep the momentum of the ecumenical movement.

She highlighted some of the pertinent challenges today: a global economy in crisis with a likely unequal recovery; increasing public debt; decreases in global trade and financial flows to developing countries; amplified existing inequalities, in particular with those groups who are most vulnerable; and heightened rivalry, anti-globalization, nationalism, and vaccine apartheid.

There is direct impact of COVID-19 on the fellowship of churches and faith communities where religious gatherings were hugely affected, but some oppressive regimes went further to deal a blow to religious freedom in the guise of preventing COVID-19. Other rising threats to religious freedom include a rise in Islamophobia; rise in anti-Semitism; persecution of Christians; psycho-social support and economic problems; loss of church leaders and resulting leadership gap; information; stigma and/or discrimination; gender-based violence and early marriages. Church economy, fellowship and pastoral work have been shaken in addition to the burden of death that has hit the churches.

Even with these many challenges, the moderator also saw key opportunities for the churches moving forward. The entry point to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic is through proper vaccination. The churches should brace for thoughtful, intentional, and urgent engagement with other development

and government authorities in vaccination strategies and delivery. This can be done through building trust and relationships with other religious actors; seeing the church hospitals, nurses, doctors, and administrators as significant assets; providing hope and spaces to strengthen the moral commitment to service by both senior and younger leaders.

She was confident that though churches are definitely troubled by the COVID-19 pandemic and related key challenges, they are not destroyed. Churches continue to show a high level of adaptability to major changes with little or no support. Pastors have been on the frontline offering pastoral services in particular, pastors in rural communities continued their pastoral visits and accompaniment of vulnerable and bereaved families even during lockdowns. Church youth have played a pivotal role assisting clergy and church workers to use technology in their ministry. The pandemic forced the churches to find ways to share the good news/Gospel electronically as well keep in touch with members. During this time of pandemic and in future, the Church is challenged to continue to find new ways to offer mental health, encouraging health-promoting churches, promoting church as a space of wholeness and church as a sacred and safe space.

With regard to the process of the election of the World Council of Churches general secretary, she stated that the pandemic and the resulting separation has challenged the WCC in exercising governance responsibility. She assured the members that the primary and permanent concern has been remaining faithful to the common understanding and vision of the WCC, to maintaining the spirit of our fellowship, to preserving our mutual accountability, to cultivating the ethos of consensus, and to always enabling and giving priority to the process of consensus discernment.

The executive committee, after careful consideration of WCC rules, decided to convene the central committee by electronic communications with a limited agenda. It is in the same spirit that, after thorough consultation with the governance review group and the executive committee, it was decided not to include the process of election of the new general secretary in the agenda of this meeting. Neither the provisions of WCC Rules and the Supplement to the Rules, nor the spirit and ethos of consensus which constitutes the heart and the backbone of our governance could be fully implemented during our first meeting by electronic communication. Therefore, it was decided to continue the process of election during an in-person meeting planned for the beginning of next year 2022.

In conclusion she said that in this challenging time, churches have shown determination to remain faithful to commitment to move together. In a time where the world faces an historic set of challenges, the church must step up and be seen and heard in the public space, re-assert and even strengthen the voice of WCC. "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity" – that love enables unity of purpose, a common witness and the ability to speak with one impactful voice.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios thanked Dr Abuom for her excellent report.

1.5. Report of the Executive Committee

Bishop Dr Mary Ann Swenson (United Methodist Church), vice-moderator of the central committee, presented the report of the executive committee.

According to WCC Rule VIII. 1. b.: "The executive committee shall be accountable to the central committee and shall present to each central committee meeting a report of its work. The central committee shall consider such a report and take such action in regard to it as it thinks fit."

This report covers the period since the last central committee meeting in 2018 to this online meeting.

All the discussions and decisions of the executive committee's meetings can be found in the minutes. She described the nine meetings, three in-person and six by electronic communications, highlighting some of the deliberations and decisions of the committee. It includes a report of the impact of the pandemic, the planning for the assembly and other programmatic work, and a report on finances. It focuses on some of the essential aspects of the ongoing work, especially the work in the pilgrimage of justice and peace and the work on the Green Village project. There were some modifications in the programme structure such as the new transversal on Overcoming Racism, restructuring our Jerusalem-based activities, how to approach ecumenical continuing formation in this difficult season and the need to scale up activities on health and healing. The report highlights the work on relationships with ecumenical partners and includes a tribute and expression of gratitude for his years of leadership in the WCC to the former general secretary, along with congratulations to him on his election as presiding bishop of the Church of Norway.

She drew the attention of the central committee to the two appendices to the report which included the public issues statements issued by the executive committee as well as the follow up to the recommendations from the June 2018 central committee meeting.

She concluded the presentation with some comments on the positive way in which the members of the governing and consultative bodies adapted to the different ways of working in this unprecedented and stressful time. She lauded the faithfulness of the executive committee in carrying out their tasks on behalf of the council and the fellowship of churches, as well as the leadership of the acting general secretary, Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca, and the work of the staff in this period. She confirmed that the voice of the WCC has continued to be heard around the world, particularly in the situations of conflict, injustice and oppression and has been appreciated by many.

The moderator of the session thanked Bishop Swenson for the presentation of the report of the executive committee.

1.6. Report of the Acting General Secretary

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios invited the acting general secretary, Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca, to present his report to the central committee

He began his report by thanking the former general secretary, Bishop Olav Fykse Tveit, for his spiritual encouragement during the prayer and for his leadership in a time of unprecedented change. Together with the moderator, he led the WCC response at the beginning of the pandemic, encouraging the churches to do everything possible to protect life.

Fr Sauca thanked the central committee members for making this first online meeting of the central committee a priority. He thanked the leadership of the central committee whose leadership provided stability and direction and the members of the executive committee for their tremendous commitment. He expressed gratitude to the WCC staff who pioneered new ways of engaging our member churches and ecumenical partners.

He referred to the monthly accountability reports sent out to the central committee since the pandemic began, which show how the Council and its staff adapted to the new situation, and the continuing relevance of the work for unity and reconciliation.

He spoke of the enormous and surprising changes that came about as a result of the pandemic in the last period. It continues to cause tremendous suffering and exacerbate existing and emerging

inequalities, making unity, as one human family and as a fellowship of churches, more important than ever. The member churches have been incredibly resilient and responsive during the pandemic. Despite the adaptations, including postponing the assembly by one year and changing ways of working what is inspiring is the love of God in Christ for all creation and the primary purpose of the WCC as fellowship of churches calling one another "to visible unity in one faith and in one Eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in in Christ" (WCC Constitution, Article III).

The limits imposed by the pandemic pushed the WCC to accomplish many things in different ways, including the enhanced use of online work. Hybrid methodologies provide new opportunities for working together. There has been more communication with member churches and partners and an increase in regional cooperation, helping to keep the churches at the centre of our common efforts. He felt that one of the most inspiring developments was providing opportunities for global prayer, regional prayer and daily prayer even as the member churches adapted to online prayer and worship.

He highlighted some programmatic areas including the newly launched programme on overcoming racism and the consolidation and strengthening WCC Jerusalem-based activities.

Good progress has been made towards the objectives for the Green Village property development project with the construction site opening in March 2020. Though the pandemic brought financial challenges, the generosity of the member churches and ecumenical partners allowed WCC to continue its work and prepare the fellowship towards the assembly.

With regard to the preparations for the assembly in Karlsruhe in 2022, the situation is being monitored closely, planning different scenarios for health and safety requirements. The report of the assembly planning committee presents a vision for an assembly deeply rooted in the theme – "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity". The proposed agenda will engage the delegates in prayer, reflection, conversation and action. Much work has been done by the assembly planning committee and the assembly worship planning committee.

The theme has taken on new meaning through the experience of the pandemic. When one speaks about the love of Christ, one speaks about the kenotic and indiscriminate love of God in Christ for the whole of creation. This is the very essence of our faith and taking this direction, the Common Understanding and Vision (CUV) of the WCC have been affirmed. Reconciliation and unity are God's final purpose in Christ for humankind and creation (Colossians 1:19) and is exemplified with Christ's compassion for the suffering in Matthew (9:35-39) and in many other passages of the four gospels. This perspective opened solid theological ways for dialogue and cooperation with the world.

Christ's love opens the horizon of hope. As a fellowship of churches, we remain faithful to our founding purpose – to promote Christian unity so that the world may believe. At the same time, it is equally important to restate that God's purpose in Christ is to move the whole world and the entire cosmos to reconciliation and unity. As the WCC fellowship prepares to gather in Karlsruhe, Germany for the 11th Assembly, the experience of the churches in responding to a global pandemic will continue to shape our understanding of how "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity".

The acting general secretary hoped that the central committee meeting would

1. Strengthen our fellowship through sharing and praying together;
2. Receive applications for membership in the WCC, recognize new ecumenical partners and address other issues of membership; and
3. Move together towards the 11th WCC assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany.

He referred the members to the list of pending business, appended to his report that the central committee has not yet addressed. The list is a reminder that there is more work to do before the Karlsruhe assembly. It is hoped that the central committee will meet in person in early 2022 to complete the work.

He concluded his report with an affirmation that God is the Lord of history, Ruler of the universe and that God's revealed intent is to bring life, unity and reconciliation to the whole world. He reminded the committee of Christ's steadfast promise to the disciples, "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios thanked Fr Sauca for his report. He informed the committee that the three reports presented would be discussed in all the committees. He opened the floor for comments.

Rev. Prof. Dr Fernando Enns (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Gemeinden in Deutschland) asked a question for clarification about the gender justice principles which are to be forwarded to central committee for action. The status of these is unclear if the executive committee encouraged the acting general secretary to implement the proposal for equal work. Fr Sauca explained that while the principles document is still pending, certain issues of gender justice had to be implemented internally for our staff in order to comply with Swiss law.

H.E. Metropolitan Seraphim Kykotis (Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa) commended the leadership of the central committee for their cooperation with the members of staff in these difficult times. He particularly appreciated the work in communications, so that the voice of the WCC could be heard.

With regard to the election of a new WCC general secretary, Janet Scott (Friends World Committee for Consultation) asked whether the two candidates who had been short listed were still interested in the post or, because it has been so long, whether the position is to be re-advertised. The moderator of the central committee, Dr Abuom, responded that as custodian of the search process, she was asked to write to the candidates informing them of the process. This was done and both have expressed their desire to remain candidates for this position.

Dr Audeh Quawas (Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem) reminded the committee that although the names of the candidates have been made public, the search committee report, in which their names are recommended, has not yet been presented to or accepted by the central committee. They would only be invited to speak to the central committee if the search committee report is received by the central committee at the in-person meeting in February 2022.

Rev. Dr Henriette Hutabarat-Lebang (Gereja Toraja) expressed her gratitude for the three reports presented. She referred to a conference she had attended on being an anti-racist church. She felt that the ecumenical family should keep racial justice at the centre of the conversation and because millions of people all over the world are still victims of racism. It is important to shift from a Euro-centric vision of the world and to speak form the margins. She closed her remarks reminding the house that because of the many time zones, some of those in Asia and particularly the members in the Pacific region, are participating in this meeting very late. She felt that some alternatives could be considered in future to remedy this.

Dr Abuom assured Dr Hutabarat-Lebang that the leadership takes note of these concerns. For this reason it is important to keep focused and maintain the limited agenda as decided by the executive committee.

Before the break, H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios said that more detailed comments or questions about the reports presented could be raised in the standing committee meetings.

Following the break the vice-moderator called on acting general secretary, Fr Ioan Sauca, to present the matters to be referred to committees for further discussion.

Fr Sauca presented an overview of all the suggested actions before this central committee for consideration including the matters for decision for referral to standing committees. All committees would review the address of the moderator (GEN 01), the report of the executive committee (GEN 02) and the report of the acting general secretary (GEN 03).

1.7. Committee Agendas

1.7.1. Communications Committee Agenda

The communications committee agenda includes the report of the central committee to the assembly – From Busan to Karlsruhe. It also includes the 2022 addendum to the WCC communication strategy. The items are referred to the communication committee, under the leadership of Ms Miriam Jane Weibye (Church of Scotland).

The report From Busan to Karlsruhe recounts the journey of the WCC since the last assembly in 2013. It is the story of a fellowship of churches committed to moving together on a pilgrimage of justice of peace. It is the report of the central committee to the assembly. It has been revised to include the experience of the pandemic. It will be published 6 months before the assembly.

The WCC communications strategy was approved by the executive committee in November 2018. Though the timelines have changed the strategy remains well-aligned with the overall strategy of the WCC and served the WCC well in adapting to an increase in online activities. The strategy requires minor amendments.

1.7.2 Finance Policy Committee Agenda

The finance policy committee agenda includes an update on WCC finances. It includes the 2022 addendum to the WCC financial strategy. The matters are referred to the finance policy committee, under the leadership of His Eminence Archbishop Dr Vicken Aykazian (Armenian Apostolic Church [Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin]).

The update on finance is presented for information. It highlights significant financial issues addressed by the executive committee since 2018 and also presents an outline budget for the 11th Assembly.

The WCC Financial Strategy 2018-2021 was approved by the central committee in June 2018. Following the postponement of the assembly, it is necessary to extend the strategy to include 2022. An addendum for 2022 is presented for consideration and approval.

The update on the Green Village property development project for the WCC headquarters in Geneva is presented for information. A presentation on progress with Green Village will follow.

1.7.2. Governance and Nominations Committee Agenda

The governance and nominations committee agenda includes nominations of replacements and substitutes on committees and working groups. It also includes a review of member church

nominations for the assembly. The items are referred to the governance and nominations committee, under the leadership of Bishop Simo Peura (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland).

Nominations forwarded by the executive committee include replacements for central committee and executive committee members who resigned or passed away. It also includes nominations for other committees and consultative bodies received since the last central committee.

A report on assembly nominations is presented. Over 80% of the member churches have nominated their delegations. According the WCC rules, the central committee nominates up to 20% of the total delegates based on proposals for additional delegates from the member churches. The report also includes an update on ecumenical partner nominations. The report includes other suggested actions about developing invitations to advisors, guests, speakers, interfaith partners and delegated observers from churches that are not members of the WCC.

1.7.3. Policy Reference Committee Agenda

The policy reference committee agenda includes the application of two churches for membership in the WCC and other issues related to membership. The items are referred to the policy reference committee, under the leadership of Archbishop Emeritus Dr Joris Vercammen (Old-Catholic Church in the Netherlands).

Applications are presented of two churches for membership in the WCC – The First African Church Mission (Nigeria) and the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa. The permanent committee on consensus and collaboration and the executive committee recommend that the application of both churches be received for an interim period until the next regular meeting of the central committee after the assembly.

The document also includes the request to recognize as member churches two provinces of the Episcopal Church in Sudan and in South Sudan. The new province came into existence with the birth of South Sudan when one member church became two churches.

The Cook Islands Christian Church reiterated its decision to resign its membership in the WCC. The church says it is small and prefers to be ecumenically involved in the Pacific region.

In June 2016 the central committee suspended the membership of the Church of Jesus Christ on Earth by His Special Envoy Simon Kimbangu (Kimbanguist Church), asking the general secretary to make every effort to retain their membership. Unfortunately, there was no development towards a constructive solution. Both the permanent committee on consensus and collaboration and the executive committee recommend that the suspension be completed by discontinuing the membership of the Kimbanguist Church.

The document on membership matters also presents the requests of the International Orthodox Christian Charities, in the United States, and the Amity Foundation, in China, to be recognized as specialized ministries in a working relationship with the WCC.

Due to the pandemic, it has not been possible to visit a number of churches whose applications for membership are encouraging. It is proposed that the central committee invite the churches to nominate a delegated observer to the assembly and join us in Karlsruhe.

1.7.4. Programme Committee Agenda

The programme committee agenda includes the report of the assembly planning committee and the 2022 addendum to the WCC strategic plan. The items are referred to the programme committee, under the leadership of Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland).

The report of the assembly planning committee (APC) is a comprehensive and concise account of the work of the APC since the central committee met in 2018. It presents a vision for an assembly deeply rooted in the theme. It describes a coherence of daily themes and Bible texts, the experience of "a day in the life of the assembly" and the "building blocks" of the programme.

In 2018 the central committee approved the current WCC strategic plan 2018-2021. In view of the COVID-19 pandemic and the postponement of the assembly to 2022, an addendum is needed to include 2022 in the period 2018-2022. The framework of the strategic plan remains valid and continues to guide the work of the WCC in the midst of the pandemic.

Dr Abuom thanked the acting general secretary for the presentation of matters before the central committee.

These matters were referred by consensus to the various standing committees.

1.8. Green Village Update

The moderator invited two members of the steering committee to present the update on the Green Village property development project.

Mrs Anne Glynn-Mackoul (Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East), on behalf of the steering committee, thanked the moderator for the opportunity to present a brief update of the work over the past three years.

She shared a view of the master plan as approved by the Canton of Geneva in January 2018 with six new buildings and a park grouped around the Ecumenical Centre. The Green Village is a major development in international Geneva with about 60,000 m2 of floor space as compared to 15,000 m2 initially on the site.

The project is currently in Phase 1 and construction is taking place on the Montreal residential building and the Kyoto office building.

The objectives for the real estate development were first defined by the executive committee in September 2011 and are

- Reimburse the load of CHF 24 million which secured pensions;
- Ensure a new or renovated Ecumenical Centre for the 21st century; and
- Own property generating at lease CHF 3 million annually in rental income.

The steering committee was formed in September 2011 to accompany the process, report to executive committee and to ensure the Council's interests are safeguarded. The steering committee proposes recommendations on strategy to the executive committee for decision drawing on the expertise of advisors, including two advisors recommended by member churches, and professional advisors. In undertaking the work the WCC collaborates closely with Implenia, the leading Swiss construction and real estate services company.

Several strategic decisions have been taken by executive committee on this project in the past period:

- The Kyoto office building would be sold together with the land – June 2017
- For the Montreal building there would be the sale of land, rather than land lease and the new owner will fund the building construction – November 2017
- The demolition of all the wings at the Ecumenical Centre will take place at the same time, rather than in two stages – November 2019
- Given the objective to invest in the Lima office building (connected to the Ecumenical Centre), the for the Durban building it was decided to sell the land and the project, in order to general capital towards the construction of the Lima building – November 2020
- The preferred strategy for the Stockholm building is a land lease, subject to the results of market tests and studies – November 2020.

Since the last meeting of the central committee in June 2018 there were several achievements in the project.

- The land plot of 34,000 m2 in Grand-Saconnex was divided into ten plots;
- The concept of the shared "auxiliary plot" of 20,000 m2, the future park, with its ownership shared, with rights and obligations governed by registered rules for administration and use, was brought into the project;
- The launch of the Montreal residential building to market in June 2019 and the sale of all 48 apartments by December 2020, even under COVID conditions, realising CHF 22.4 million in land-share sales for 2019 and 2020 which means that WCC is well on the way to the net target result for the project of CHF 17.3 million before tax;
- Loans were paid down by CHF 12 million, i.e. half of the objective;
- A tender process for selection of the hotel operator for the Rio building took place and a hotel operator was selected; but given the current conditions in the hotel industry that project is now on hold for review in autumn 2021;
- In May 2020, following the submission of several offers for the Kyoto building, exclusivity was granted to one potential buyer for a limited time; if an agreement is reached then there will be a sale with the perspective of a transaction this summer; if not then other offers will be revisited;
- Parties are interested in both the Durban and Stockholm buildings and approved preliminary offers have come forward.

She concluded by saying that WCC goes forward prayerfully with the hope and vision that the stewardship represented by the project Green Village will secure the WCC's future in international Geneva.

Archbishop Emeritus Dr Anders Wejryd (Church of Sweden) spoke about sustainability at Green Village. He said that good stewardship means sustainability and planning wisely with the resources available. The taller buildings will have solar panels which will be connected to the main electricity grid and will produce electricity for the Green Village buildings. Geothermal wells will be used for heating and cooling of the Montreal and Kyoto buildings.

In September 2019 WCC completed a detailed plan of action on sustainability. It is the first district in Geneva to apply One Planet Living principles. A charter was signed with a detailed action plan, together with Implenia and the Commune of Grand-Saconnex, committing to independent reviews against those standards. In March 2021 the Swiss Association for Sustainable Districts confirmed standards are met in the planning phase. In addition to the work with the association it is also now envisaged to obtain a certification for the Kyoto building under the Swiss Construction Sustainability Standards.

Archbishop Wejryd also named some challenges in the project. Just before signing the contract for geothermal energy, traces of oil pollution were found on the site which would place at risk the possibility to access ground water . It was decided to stay on course with the plan. At this point, both land plots for Phase 1 have been certified as free of pollution. All water testing results were good and a favourable decision from the authorities on the geothermal energy plan is expected.

There have been delays with the Kyoto building. The plan was to bring the building to market in early 2020. When the pandemic hit the strategy was patience. However in spring 2021 there was a risk of complete slowdown and even closure of the building site if the investor was not identified. At this point the decision to proceed to sale was taken, together with Implenia, even if the target rental level would not be reached.

He then outlined the next steps for the project:

- The plans for the Lima building should move forward so that while the building is going on WCC remains a tenant in Kyoto for no more than three years. There is good news that the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is interested in becoming a co-owner with WCC of the Lima building.
- The land sale for the Durban building will be needed to secure funds for construction of the Lima building.
- Market studies for sale by floor will be undertaken for the Stockholm building.
- For the Rio (hotel) building, discussions will resume later this year.
- WCC staff and some Ecumenical Centre tenants will move to Kyoto in 2023.

Since 2012 WCC has been working on strategy, design, marketing and sales transactions. As of 2022 there will be a new phase of planning for removal, demolition and construction. Governance accompaniment and decision-making will be important for the project over the next five years. He concluded saying there are good signs of hope that WCC will meet the objectives set for the Green Village project.

Dr Abuom thanked the presenters for the update and encouraged the members of the central committee to send an email to the finance policy committee or the secretariat with any questions or points for clarification.

1.9. Presentation of applicant churches and specialized ministries

1.9.1. Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa

Dr Abuom invited Rev. Dr Japie Jimmy Lapoorta, deputy president of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa (AFM of SA) to present his church. The church has its origins in the second chapter of Acts via the Azusa Street Revival in 1906 in Los Angeles. In May 1908 in a township called Doornfontein in Johannesburg, the walls of separation between races, genders, classes, ethnic groups, and generations collapsed so that the people of God could worship together in unity. Unfortunately in the same year the leaders of the church took a decision to segregate the church at the baptismal pool. This decision resulted in the formation of four ethnic-based churches, one for Whites which happened to be the mother, and three black – for Africans, Coloureds, and Indians in line with the political system of Apartheid.

Unity negotiations started in the four churches in 1985 and a declaration of agreement on structural unity between the four churches was signed. However, the White church tried to derail the process, and in 1993, a year before the first democratic elections in the country, the three Black churches united as the AFM Composite church. Unity with the White church only happened in 1996.

The church's confession of faith derives from the Nicene Creed and it is in the Trinitarian Pentecostal movement. It holds membership in the Evangelical Alliance of South Africa (TEASA), the South African Council of Churches (SACC), the National Pentecostal Forum (NPF) and the Pentecostal World Fellowship.

The AFM-SA has 1.4 million members in South Africa and is operative in 28 other countries, mostly in Africa. The church has various ministries including: children's ministry, youth ministry, women's ministry, men's ministry, education and training department, and the welfare department in which the church is involved socially.

Dr Lapoorta thanked the central committee for considering the church for membership in the WCC.

H.E. Metropolitan Seraphim was glad to receive the application of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa. As was mentioned, part of the church supported apartheid but now they were reconciled. It is important to testify to this *metanoia*.

1.9.2. The First African Church Mission

The moderator invited the Most Rev. Dr Sunday Oludare Matilukuro, Primate of The First African Church Mission, Nigeria & Overseas, & the Proprietor of Schools to give a presentation on his church.

The church was founded on August 1891 in Lagos as the United Native African Church (UNA), and its name was changed to The First African Church Mission in the year 1984. It was renamed as it was the first church founded by indigenous Africans in Africa.

The church believes in the Triune God. The church is Pentecostal, believing in the power of the Holy Spirit. The liturgy used in the church is almost the same as that of the Anglican Communion. Church members are encouraged to go into evangelism. In Nigeria, there are 1,000 branches of the church. There are three dioceses in Benin. He concluded by thanking the committee for the opportunity to present the church.

Dr Abuom thanked both church leaders for their presentations.

Prof. Dr Enns asked why the application of The First African Church Mission was postponed for such a long time as the visit already took place in 2018. He also noted that the proposed recommendation for final acceptance only in 2023 was too long and would not be encouraging for this church.

Mr Doug Chial, director in the office of the general secretariat, outlined the process for applicant churches: first the application is made; then a process of discernment takes place on whether to send a delegation to visit the church; a visit then takes place after which the report is reviewed by the permanent committee on consensus and collaboration and then by the executive committee; if it emerges that there is a positive direction towards membership then a recommendation is forwarded to central committee for action. He said that new applicant churches can only be accepted by the central committee. While the applications were accepted by the executive committee for forwarding to the central committee, the current meeting was the first one since the June 2018 meeting held here in Geneva. Mr Chial added that once the acceptance of application is approved by central committee (usually from one central committee to the next), an interim period is set to establish whether a consensus has emerged among the member churches to accept the applicant church as a member. The proposed recommendation was to ensure that there would be enough time for building of consensus.

1.9.3. Amity Foundation

Dr Abuom welcomed Mr Zhonghui Qiu, Board Chair of Amity Foundation, China and asked him to present his organization.

Mr Qui said that on the initiative of Chinese Christians, Amity Foundation was created in 1985 and is one of the earliest, and most respected faith-based organizations in China. There are eight branches in China and three offices in Africa and Geneva. Beyond serving basic needs, Amity's mission includes humanitarian and sustainable development work, and people's empowerment. Its ministry is carried out across China and in 23 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, benefiting more than ten million people.

In fighting COVID-19, Amity has worked with local churches and the China Christian Council. Over 12 million US Dollars for anti-pandemic response, mainly in China and the rest of the world, was raised. Over one-sixth of this came from Chinese churches.

Amity Foundation provides a channel for Chinese churches to participate in ecumenical diakonia. In the last few years, the organization has joined with churches to deepen diaconal work and to encourage theological reflections on diakonia in seminaries.

He concluded the presentation by saying that Amity greatly appreciates the ecumenical sharing of resources in the WCC and its promotion of church unity and cooperation among different denominations. Amity looks forward to being part of the WCC family, working for a more just and better world that will sustain abundant lives.

1.9.4. International Orthodox Christian Charities

Mr Constantine M. Triantafilou, executive director and CEO of the International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), was invited to present.

The International Orthodox Christian Charities is a humanitarian and development agency of the assembly of canonical Orthodox bishops of the USA. IOCC represents and enjoys the support of most eastern orthodox jurisdictions including Greek, Antiochian, Serbian, Romanian and others. Located in the USA, it works globally and locally.

IOCC maintains strong, constructive relationships with the Orthodox Church across the globe including, historically, the Balkans, Eastern Europe, Middle East, Africa, the Caribbean and USA. While striving every day to focus on our mission which is to help those most in need without discrimination, IOCC has been working in the humanitarian and the development space for nearly thirty years.

Relationships with other ecumenical partners have been crucial in our work, allowing us to reach more people in times of need. These partnerships are essential and IOCC has a long history and commitment to ecumenical collaboration with the WCC, ACT Alliance, partners and other specialised ministries of the WCC.

Mr Triantafilou thanked the committee for its careful consideration of IOCC's application to become a specialised ministry in working relationship with the WCC.

The moderator thanked Mr Qiu and Mr Triantafilou for their presentations and for expressing the interest to be part of this movement. She said that this would be referred to the policy reference committee for discussion.

1.10. 11th Assembly

At the invitation of the moderator, H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios introduced the report of the assembly planning committee (APC). The report is a compilation of all the APC meetings since 2018. There were three in-person meetings including one together with the assembly worship planning committee. In addition, there were four online meetings and one together with the assembly worship planning committee. The assembly preparation process was presented through a video involving APC members, churches, government representatives and partners in Germany as well as staff.

Mr Andrej Jeftić (Serbian Orthodox Church) explained that the APC is a body whose purpose is to assist the central committee in the preparation of the assembly. The members of APC are not only central committee members from the member churches but also representatives of partner ecumenical organizations. In its meetings the APC has discussed all the issues pertaining to the preparation of the assembly – venue, themes, structure, timetable, seat allocations, spiritual life, etc. The proposals of the APC are coming to the central committee for consideration.

Rev. Marianne Brekken (Church of Norway) added that considering the situation since the pandemic broke, the work of the APC has gone well. She noted that it was important to have done a lot of work in the first three in-person meetings in Geneva, Cyprus and in Karlsruhe. During the last year the APC has checked with the staff and host churches and followed the updates on the planning. The preparations are flexible, adapting to the situation as the APC tries to find solutions for the different ways the assembly can happen, in a way and spirit that a WCC assembly should.

In response to a question, Mr Jeftić said that the biggest challenge for the assembly is the pandemic situation. At first the assembly had to be postponed which made the whole process of preparation even more difficult. How the pandemic situation will evolve and how it will look in September 2022 are under constant consideration. The APC has developed alternative plans for the assembly. To some extent the whole assembly framework had to be reworked. Having online APC meetings is a challenge in itself but the meetings have been conducted in a spirit of fellowship and this has helped the APC to meet this challenge in the best way possible.

Rev. Brekken shared some highlights of the work of the APC. She echoed that there was a good spirit of fellowship in the work and in its progress. The moderator of the APC, H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios has been very inclusive, allowing time for listening to all the members, as the APC had in-depth discussions in the first meetings before we set the framework of the assembly. Living out the atmosphere desired for the assembly has been important to the APC as it shaped the programme. The assembly is a space where the ecumenical movement comes together in an inclusive way for unity and cooperation and working on including this in the assembly has been a highlight. She very much looked forward to the home groups feeling that these would be quite meaningful for the participants. She added that the visit to the assembly site, venue and town of Karlsruhe was a highlight for the APC. Karlsruhe is an inclusive city where one feels welcome and almost at home.

The APC members were thanked for their input.

H.E. Dr Volker Berresheim, Ambassador for Religion and Foreign Policy, German Federal Foreign Office, expressed his greetings to the central committee. He was delighted that the WCC will have the next

assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany. He said the challenges of the times are enormous but promised to help make the best of it.

Dr Silke Lechner, Deputy Head Division Religion and Foreign Policy, German Federal Foreign Office, was also very glad to cooperate with WCC in this process of preparing the assembly. She had worked for the German Protestant Kirchentag and believes strongly that faith-based actors play an important role in foreign policy. Many of the faith-based actors work for peace and stability in their societies just as diplomats do. She wished the central committee fruitful discussions for this meeting.

The Lord Mayor Dr Frank Mentrup of the City of Karlsruhe also presented his greetings. He said that Karlsruhe is a place where one quickly feels at home and accepted. The city was founded 300 years ago in 1715 and has always been a city of tolerance, religious freedom and sharing. At the same time Karlsruhe is an international and cosmopolitan city. Almost 30% of those living in the city have a migration background and have brought along their beliefs and cultures. All this, together with an ideal city centre infrastructure and easy to use services, makes Karlsruhe the perfect host for your assembly.

In the past few weeks during numerous meetings he saw that everyone involved is working hard on the preparations for 2022. Given all the passion that the people show he expressed his certainty that it will be an unforgettable assembly. He wished the central committee a successful meeting and looked forward to seeing the participants next year in Karlsruhe.

Prof. Dr Jochen Cornelius-Bundschu, Bishop of the Protestant Church in Baden, EKD, told the central committee that the church is looking forward to the assembly, this great meeting of Christianity in the world here in Karlsruhe in September 2022. Although the assembly had to be postponed for one year, the joy of the hosts has grown even more. The regional churches, the Archdiocese of Freiburg, the Protestant Church in Alsace, all the large and small churches and international congregations are already preparing intensively for the great event and are planning what they can contribute.

He said they were eager to be good hosts. He looked forward to beautiful services and spiritual impulses, to words that bring peace and justice to the world, and strengthen reverence for life. He felt that the assembly theme “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity” is already moving many people and not only in the churches but also in the world. This promise strengthens our faith and calls us to responsibility. It is carried with us into our encounters in business and culture; with the high courts that are based in Karlsruhe; into schools and youth groups and into political debates about human rights and climate change, about the gap between rich and poor that Corona has widened, and about vaccination justice. He hoped that this theme would also influence the deliberations and decisions of a central committee.

H.E. Metropolitan Seraphim asked that the proposal which came from the commission on education and ecumenical formation for an ecumenical conversation on repentance which leads us to reconciliation and unity be accepted. This *metanoia* also includes the area of ecology. He also asked whether a request will be coming to the member churches for facilitators for Bible studies during the assembly.

The moderator thanked those involved in the assembly presentation and reminded the central committee that questions about the assembly planning committee report can be sent to the Programme Committee, about Green Village to the Finance Policy Committee and about the applicant churches and specialized ministries to the Policy Reference Committee.

1.11. Closing remarks

Dr Abuom thanked the central committee members for their participation on this first day of the first online central committee meeting. Besides a few technical issues she felt it had gone smoothly. The reports had been presented and referred to the standing committees.

She reminded the committee that the following day would be for regional meetings. The links to the meetings will be shared by the secretariat by email. As the next day was a Thursday, the moderator asked the central committee members to express their solidarity with the movement of Thursdays in Black, against rape and gender-based violence.

On Friday and Saturday meetings would be in standing committees. The links for those meetings can be found in the annotated agenda and reminders will be sent by the secretariat. She invited the prayer leaders to begin the closing prayer.

1.12. Closing prayer

The prayer to conclude the session was a memorial prayer, remembering those leaders who have served the World Council of Churches and the ecumenical movement at large. There are many in the member churches who have gone home and, as in other central committee meetings, they are remembered in the prayers.

2. 28 June Plenary

The central committee plenary begin with members and participants sharing greetings from all over the world through the chat function.

The moderator, Dr Agnes Abuom, welcomed everyone and was happy that the committee had proved able to meet and carry out its agenda digitally, through the plenary session, regional meetings and standing committees. She said that the regional meetings were informative and inspiring. She mentioned that the Africa regional meeting included good inputs from WCC staff who helped the central committee members understand what the Council has been doing in that region.

2.1. Opening Prayer

Prayers for the week were focused on the people and churches of Kenya and Tanzania. The prayer included a scripture reading from Psalm 104 and a reflection by Bishop Dr Alex Malasusa (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania) based on John 9:1-12.

He recounted how this text shows how Jesus, despite being busy in his ministry, pays attention to the “blind man” while the disciples are busy trying to figure out how to judge who is responsible for the blind man's misery. Out of his compassion, Jesus after providing a straight answer on God's will to restore life, he heals the blind man. Jesus does this on Sabbath, something which causes havoc among the Jews and they spend much time to find who has healed the blind man on Sabbath. While for many observance of the Sabbath was important for the preservation of traditions, Jesus gives the Sabbath its meaning of completing the restoration of human life.

Jesus engaged in the dialogue with his own disciples and taught them the ultimate goal of his presence in the world. His presence was to see that the lives of people are restored. He does it through spiritual (God's will), available resources (by using mud) and by respecting cultural institutions (by sending the

blind man to wash himself in the pool of Siloam). In this we see how Jesus engages the whole creation, even the blind man himself, to make sure that life is restored. Bishop Malasusa concluded by emphasizing the importance of restoring life in this world that is torn apart by social and economic injustices, and pandemics. Rather than judging who is better than the other in this world, as God's church the challenge is to proactively engage in saving the lives of people through God's love endowed to us in Jesus Christ.

2.2. Message from His Beatitude John X, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East

Dr Abuom moderated a hearing session.

A message was received from H.B. Patriarch John X (Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East), WCC president from the Eastern Orthodox family, to the central committee. The acting general secretary, Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca read the message to the committee.

In the message His Beatitude affirmed his closeness in prayer, and in accompanying the work of the meeting through the communication with the representatives of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East on the central committee. He referred to the assembly theme "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity" highlighting that Christians learn about love from the example of Christ's infinite love for the sake of all humans, when He voluntarily gave Himself over to death to save them from sin and death. He concluded the message with the salutation "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you" (2 Cor. 13:13).

The moderator, on behalf of the central committee, thanked H.B. Patriarch John X for his message and asked Fr Sauca to share the committee's gratitude with the patriarch for his greetings.

2.3. Regional Meetings, Part 1

Bishop Mary Ann Swenson moderated a hearing session.

Bishop Swenson counted it a privilege to begin to share with the reports from the regions with the full central committee. The regional meetings met at different times to allow for the fullest participation. Even though the meetings were not held at the same time, the groups were all together in common prayer. Because the WCC president for the Pacific region, Rev. Dr Meleana Puloka (Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga [Methodist Church in Tonga]), could not attend this session, the moderator invited Rev. James Bhagwan, general secretary of the Pacific Conference of Churches, to share from the Pacific region.

2.3.1. Pacific Region

Rev. Bhagwan extended greetings from the Pacific region to the central committee. Though the peoples of the Pacific are facing challenging times with COVD-19 which reached our region late compared to the rest of the world, the churches are determined to work on areas of resilience, in order to continue serving the communities and churches amidst the virus as it is now severely affecting different areas of life.

One positive outcome of the pandemic for some young people is that there has been time to turn to God, strengthen family bonds, looking to God to provide for the different difficulties and struggles, more time for families to pray together and have family devotion. Leaders of the church in the region

have used technology as well to reach out to young people and the bond of the church members has been strengthened through this.

Vaccine myths and miscommunications have also been another challenge as the churches in the Pacific did not speak soon enough to address the importance of vaccines to their congregations. He also reported that in spite of the challenges around COVID-19, the Regional Ecumenical Youth Council was launched in May 2021, bringing together a diverse group of youth from the Pacific region, for dialogue about key issues, partnering with youth movements to strategize on how to tackle their concerns, so that youth can contribute to the discussions on issues that concern them, concern the region and they can dialogue with our church leaders.

He noted that a number of WCC engagements in our region – notably the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace focus on the Pacific were postponed or cancelled due to COVID-19. Webinars and online engagements have tried to make up for this, but the cancellation of visits has been a major opportunity missed to engage and bring Pacific stories and concerns to the wider WCC family.

He said that gender-based violence and pressure to turn to extractive industries, both mining on the land and deep-sea mining to address our economic challenges, continue to be the biggest problems. There are concerns that climate justice is being pushed to the side as focus remains on the return to normal in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Japan's decision to dump their nuclear waste into the Pacific waters and ongoing human rights issues in West Papua continue to be a challenge as the churches raise voices for justice, peace and self-determination for the people of Papua, Kanaky (New Caledonia) and Maohi (French Polynesia).

He concluded by saying that the churches in the Pacific endeavour to focus on continuing to be prophetic, pastoral and practical in our ministries, by working with governments and other agencies who focus on the common good to serve our community and speak out for justice and peace in the journey towards the WCC's 11th Assembly.

Bishop Swenson thanked him and those who participated in the Pacific regional meeting for bringing such a thorough report to the central committee from the region.

2.3.2. Asia

Rev. Dr Sang Chang (Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea), WCC president from Asia, shared some key insights received during the Asia regional meeting. She said it was a blessing to gather together with the Asian participants engaging in a very dynamic and committed sharing of experiences.

She reported on the tremendous suffering, death, isolation, severe economic impact – impoverishing societies in Asia due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many governments have unfortunately utilised the pandemic as an excuse to oppress their people further and to exert greater control over them. The resources needed for prevention, including vaccines, have not reached many impoverished rural communities, displaced peoples and less powerful countries. The churches have devoted themselves to provide trustworthy and credible information to people regarding the pandemic and have been champions for promoting vaccinations and advocating for vaccine justice. Despite the challenges, churches across Asia have responded consistently in providing spiritual, pastoral and existential support to communities. They have also been negotiating the online space, acquiring new skills with the active leadership of the youth, binding communities across the world. The crisis has also shown the resilience, dynamism and effectiveness of women's leadership in society.

With regard to human rights, the period since the last central committee meeting has clearly shown that it is imperative for us to speak up and act against the violations of human rights and dignity and to accompany and protect those who are being victimized. We heard painful narratives from the Philippines, West Papua, and Myanmar. Many who stand up for truth, justice and peace are martyred, and those who murder do so with impunity, but it was inspiring to hear of the courageous stand and the actions taken by individual churches, the national councils of churches, the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), and the WCC.

The climate crisis is increasingly impacting lives, with more frequent occurrences of cyclones, floods and landslides. Churches continue to challenge the problem locally in many countries, and all signs point to the need to redouble the ecumenical efforts on these matters.

Dr Chang reported that the regional group heard from CCA and the WCC staff about the ecumenical work in Asia including the close collaboration between WCC and CCA. Notable was the series of pilgrim team visits to 10 Asian countries in 2019. The meeting also reaffirmed the importance and vitality of WCC inter-faith dialogue and work in Asia

During the regional meeting, one of the members of the APC from Asia, Rev. Dr Prof. Yang-en Cheng (Presbyterian Church in Taiwan), led the discussions to give a deeper understanding of the various aspects of the upcoming assembly. The group saw the assembly as an important occasion to affirm Christian witness across the world. The meeting also appreciated the commitment of the churches in Germany and the German government to the assembly. Some discussion took place on how to prepare for the 11th assembly.

Dr Chang concluded that the ecumenical movement is at a critical juncture. To continue effectively serving God, creation and humanity, solidarity between churches and communities across denominational, national and continental boundaries should be strengthened.

Bishop Swenson, thanked Dr Chang and the Asia regional group for the report and for sharing how much is happening in Asia.

2.3.3. Africa

Bishop Swenson invited the Africa regional group to present, remembering the late WCC president for Africa, Rev. Dr Mary Ann Plaatjies van Huffel. The Rt Rev. Arnold C. Temple (Methodist Church Sierra Leone) shared from the Africa regional meeting.

Bishop Temple gave greetings from the Africa regional meeting to the committee and wished that the former Africa president's soul rest in peace and may her memory continue to be a blessing to us all.

He said that the regional meeting recognized that in midst of all the challenges that Africa faces now the continent must also contend with the COVID-19 pandemic which is ravaging various countries of the region. He noted that the churches in Africa are very resilient and referred to them as "wounded healers". In spite of the fact that we are wounded, as church we provide hope to our constituents and provide the hope that is found in our Lord Jesus Christ. The churches are faced with problems yet we are a hopeful church.

With regard to the preparation for the WCC 11th Assembly, the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) is ready and willing to help our churches get ready for the assembly. The AACC and WCC will work together on this and, as part of this, will revisit the Harare Assembly. In considering the assembly

theme the churches plan to identify areas of strengths where the voice of the African churches in society is heard in the assembly itself. The delegates to the assembly from Africa will be going there with a very strong voice and a sense of joy and hope for a continent that has been deprived so much in the past. Bishop Temple thanked the committee for the opportunity to share from Africa.

Bishop Swenson thanked him for the presentation and commended the approach of preparing for the upcoming assembly with past assemblies in mind.

2.3.4. Latin America

Because the president from Latin America, Rev. Gloria Ulloa Alvarado (Iglesia Presbiteriana de Colombia), could not participate in the central committee meeting, Rev. Canon Aida Consuelo Sanchez-Navarro (The Episcopal Church) was invited to share from the Latin American region.

She began by thanking God for the opportunity to share from the region. The regional group had discussed a wide range of social, political and economic concerns, which have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. As in other regions the problems already existing before the pandemic in Latin America were aggravated by the pandemic, hitting vulnerable communities hardest. There was also an increase in risks to fragile democracies in some countries as well as more cases of violence against women and threats to the future of children.

She said that for the youth who have been hit especially by the pandemic, the churches would like a closer accompaniment by the WCC to the youth groups of churches and their networks.

She concluded confirming that the theme of the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity" serves as an inspiration to continue our ministry and a reminder that this abundant love of Christ is a daily affirmation of hope for all humankind. There are many links between the theme of the assembly and examples of suffering and despair in Latin America. It inspires all our churches that are dedicated to working for justice and peace and the care of God's creation in the current political context. The work for Christian unity and service to the poor has a special meaning that is making a difference in this world so in need of God's love and reconciling character.

Bishop Swenson thanked Rev. Sanchez-Navarro for the report from Latin America. She was happy for the reminder on how very important the theme of this assembly is and how it helps to focus on the work churches can do in service to the poor that has special meaning and makes a difference in the world, a world so much in need of God's love and reconciling character.

Dr Abuom thanked the bishop for her moderation of the session. Before moving on with the business of the session she asked Bishop Swenson to pray for those in need, those who are unwell and need healing, those who are in hospital, and those who are accompanying their beloved ones who are not also well. Bishop Swenson led the committee in prayer.

2.4. Appointment of Recorders

Before the reporting began, a quorum of 112 members and presidents was confirmed. The central committee agreed by consensus to adjust the agenda to reflect that for the time remaining the committee would meet in a decision session. H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios moderated the session.

He alerted the central committee that on the following day the dates of the next in-person meeting in February 2022 would be decided. The acting general secretary proposed meeting dates of 9-15

February 2022 with arrivals 8 and departures 16. The executive committee would meet on 8 February with arrivals on 7. The hotel, originally booked for March 2020, has those dates available. In response to the question of an alternative if an in-person meeting is not possible, H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios said the meeting would be held online.

He then proposed that the central committee appoint recorders to verify the final reports of the standing committees as follows:

- Very Rev. Ray Coster, Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand
- Bishop Sally Dyck, United Methodist Church
- Rev. Prof. Dr Fernando Enns, Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Gemeinden in Deutschland
- Ms Emily Jane Evans, Uniting Church in Australia
- Mrs Anne Glynn-Mackoul, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East

The recorders were appointed by consensus.

2.5. Report of the Policy Reference Committee

Archbishop Emeritus Dr Joris Vercammen (Old-Catholic Church in the Netherlands), moderator of the committee, introduced the report. The committee had addressed all matters on the agenda and the common prayer had offered the right basis for the discussions. All members participated in an active way and all recommendations in the report were agreed by consensus.

Three main issues were on the agenda: applicant churches, recognition of two specialized ministries as ecumenical partners in working relationship with the WCC and the suspension of a member church. The committee was delighted to have leaders of the two African churches, Dr Henri Weideman, general secretary of the Apostolic Faith Mission – South Africa (AFM-SA) and Most Rev. Dr Sunday Oludare Matilukuro, primate of the First African Church Mission (FACM), and to receive their presentations. The committee discussed the *"specified interim period"* so as to establish whether a consensus has emerged among the member churches to accept the applicant church as a member (WCC Rule 1.5). The committee recommends that because of the disruption of the pandemic and in light of the opportunity for the central committee to meet in early 2022 an appropriate interim period would be from June 2021 to early 2022.

The committee was also glad to receive requests of two specialized ministries, the Amity Foundation (China) and the International Orthodox Christian Charities. This gives the central committee the opportunity to formalize the close working relationships these organizations have with the WCC.

The committee was sad to realize that the suspension of the Church of Jesus Christ on Earth by His Special Envoy Simon Kimbangu (Kimbanguist Church) had to come to a conclusion. Many attempts were made to dialogue with the church on their membership, but with no success. The committee recommends to discontinue the church's membership in the WCC.

There was a brief clarification on the term "discontinue" which is not a word found in the WCC Rules. It was explained that suspend is the word used in the Rules for the period during which discernment is taken as to whether a church can be brought into compliance with the WCC. Discontinue is not in the Rules as a status, but rather would be an action taken and is the recommendation of the executive committee following the period of consultation with the church. An action needs to be taken to finalize the process so that this church is no longer included in the rolls of the WCC and can no longer represent itself as a WCC member church in any capacity. A change in wording of the recommendation was suggested.

Rev. Dr Angelique Walker-Smith (National Baptist Convention USA, Inc.) asked whether the churches and partners in Africa were on board with this process. Dr Abuom responded that the All Africa Conference of Churches (regional ecumenical organization) and the Organization of African Instituted Churches (communion of churches) had both participated, together with the WCC, in the correspondence and process for the suspension of the church.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios then went through the report asking the central committee to make decisions on the various recommendations.

I. Moderator's Address (GEN 01)

The policy reference committee was inspired by the call for the need to "stay together" and the commitment of the fellowship to "move together" in the moderator's address. The committee valued the moderator's analysis of pertinent challenges, recognizing that unequal recovery, increasing nationalism, racism, and the climate emergency will remain key areas of engagement even after the pandemic and must be addressed as interrelated issues.

The committee observed how the pandemic creates new divisions related to vaccine access, stigma and just distribution. The committee was thankful for the reference to the resilience of the churches but recognized the personal and pastoral impact of the pandemic on communities of faith and church leaders. They affirmed the need for "safe spaces for lament and room to be able to share stories of hope". The committee noted that the pandemic has not shaken the Christian hope among the fellowship of WCC member churches. In the light of the changing, challenging and increasingly secular context, the WCC must move forward listening to voices in its networks, sharing lessons learned as well as accompanying and empowering its member churches to strengthen the ecumenical movement with fresh perspectives for greater unity and closer fellowship. The committee affirmed that the member churches need one another. These comments are also pertinent to the report of the executive committee and the report of the acting general secretary.

The recommendation that

1. *The central committee **receive** the address of the moderator with appreciation for the comprehensive review of the challenges and opportunities experienced during the pandemic and for the moderator's call that the fellowship of WCC member churches stay together, move together and share the love of Christ with the vulnerable and those in need*

was <u>approved by consensus.</u>

II. Report of the Executive Committee (GEN 02)

The policy reference committee was encouraged by the council's efforts to continue strengthening the work of the fellowship in overcoming racism; providing advocacy and accompaniment for the churches and people of Palestine and Israel; enhancing WCC work on health and healing; and prioritizing ecumenical formation and youth engagement in the ecumenical movement.

The committee encouraged the executive committee to consider how the lessons learned from the pilgrimage of justice and peace shape the future direction of the WCC, both at the assembly and beyond. The committee felt this was of crucial importance for the member churches and the wider ecumenical movement.

The recommendation that

2. *The central committee **receive** the report of the executive committee with appreciation, recognizing the tremendous effort of the executive committee in maintaining the fellowship and caring for the institutional vitality of the WCC.*

was approved by consensus.

III. Report of the Acting General Secretary (GEN 03)

The policy reference committee expressed gratitude for the leadership of the acting general secretary and the work of the staff. The adaptations in online programme delivery and monthly reporting strengthened the involvement of the member churches and the closer accompaniment of central committee members.

With regard to pending business not on the agenda of this meeting, the policy reference committee considers it important to share unpublished reports, such as the resource document "Conversations on the Pilgrim Way" and the study document "Towards an Ecumenical Theology of Companionship", because they are helpful to the churches in addressing critical issues.

The recommendation that

3. *The central committee **receive** the report of the acting general secretary with appreciation and encourages the acting general secretary to continue providing regular accountability reports and online programme delivery as a way of strengthening the fellowship.*

was approved by consensus.

IV. Applications for membership in the WCC

A. Apostolic Faith Mission - South Africa

The policy reference committee met with Dr Henri Weideman, general secretary of the Apostolic Faith Mission – South Africa (AFM-SA). The conversation affirmed that the AFM-SA *"professes faith in the Triune God according to the scriptures, and as this is reflected in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed"*; and that *"the church baptizes in the name of the one God "Father, Son and Holy Spirit"*, which are among the theological criteria for membership in the WCC (Rule I.3.a.i and iii). This was confirmed again in writing by the church.

Archbishop Wejryd added that he had taken part in the official visit to the church. Rev. Frank Chikane, moderator of the WCC Commission of the Churches in International Affairs, is a member of this church. He affirmed that the church is very much in line with tradition and life of the WCC.

The committee discussed the *"specified interim period"* for which the application should be accepted before *"the central committee shall assess whether a consensus of member churches has developed in favour of the application, in which event the applicant church shall be considered a new member church"* (Rule 1.5.). The committee recommends that because of the disruption of the pandemic and in light of the opportunity for the central committee to meet in early 2022 an appropriate interim period would be from June 2021 to early 2022.

Dr Quawas said that the interim period is always between two central committee meetings. As this online meeting is an extraordinary one, he asked if the recommendation can stand. Mr Georges Lemopoulos, consensus consultant, said that in the rule on membership though a specific interim period is mentioned, there is no reference to central committee meetings in particular. The practice has been that membership applications are considered during one central committee meeting and then confirmed in a second meeting, usually 18 months or two years later. Dr Quawas replied that as

this kind of action can only be taken by the central committee, no specific reference to its meetings is needed in the rules.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios stated that this was not an extraordinary central committee meeting, just one with a limited agenda. Mr Lemopoulos said that it was up to the central committee to determine whether a consensus will have developed by the next meeting and make a decision. Prof. Dr Marina Kolovopoulou (Church of Greece) affirmed that following the rules and keeping up with procedure was the safer way forward and agreed that it should be brought to the next meeting of the central committee.

The recommendations that

4. *The central committee **accept** the application of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa for membership in the WCC, according to Rule 1.5, "for an interim period of participation in the work of the WCC and for interaction with the local fellowship of member churches", i.e. until the next meeting of the central committee in early 2022*

and that

5. *The central committee **instruct** the general secretary to consult with the member churches during the interim period, so that the central committee can assess whether a consensus of member churches has developed in favour of the application according to Rule I.5*

were approved by consensus.

B. The First African Church Mission (Nigeria)

The policy reference committee met with Most Rev. Dr Sunday Oludare Matilukuro, primate of the First African Church Mission (FACM). The conversation affirmed that FACM is a well-established church and is a member of the Christian Council of Nigeria and the All Africa Conference of Churches. These ecumenical relations inspired the church to apply for membership in the WCC.

Also for this church the committee recommends that because of the disruption of the pandemic and in light of the opportunity for the central committee to meet in early 2022 an appropriate interim period would be from June 2021 to early 2022.

The recommendations that

6. *The central committee **accept** the application of the First African Church Mission for membership in the WCC, according to Rule I.5, "for an interim period of participation in the work of the WCC and for interaction with the local fellowship of member churches", i.e. until the next meeting of the central committee in early 2022*

and that

7. *The central committee **instruct** the general secretary to consult with the member churches during the interim period, so that the central committee can assess whether a consensus of member churches has developed in favour of the application according to Rule 1.5*

were approved by consensus.

V. Recognition of new provinces of WCC member churches

A. Province of the Episcopal Church of Sudan and Province of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan

After South Sudan became an independent country in 2011, the Episcopal Church of Sudan (WCC member church), experienced a change in structure, leading to the creation of two independent

provinces of the Episcopal Church of Sudan and the Episcopal Church of South Sudan. It was affirmed that both provinces are in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury and are members of the Anglican Communion.

Dr Quawas felt that as there is a new church it should go through the same process as all applicant churches. It was clarified that this was not a "church split" in the normal sense, but rather a separation due to a new context, of the two countries, Sudan and South Sudan. Mr Elisama Daniel (Episcopal Church of South Sudan) confirmed that this had been a peaceful process.

Mr Chial said that the request to recognize the two churches separately came to the WCC from the leadership of the two provinces and that the church family, the Anglican Communion recognizes two provinces rather than one – the church family has changed its structure. He also confirmed that the churches have over 4 million faithful each.

Ms Glynn-Mackoul said a new application was unnecessary. These two new churches were part of a WCC member church. Neither one nor the other needs to make a new application and neither one nor the other has the privilege of being the continuing vs the new church. Mr Lemopoulos added that in the case where two member churches unite, the church is not asked to reapply to WCC membership. If it is a real church split, the churches are simply not accepted into membership. But this is not the case here. Each church fulfils the criteria for membership, even separately. They both follow the basis and the congregations which make up both churches have been part of a WCC member church for many years. For this reason no new application process is necessary.

The recommendation that

8. *The central committee **recognize** the continued membership of the Province of the Episcopal Church of Sudan and the Province of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan as two member churches of the WCC*

was approved by consensus.

VI. Resignation and discontinuation of membership in the WCC

A. Cook Islands Christian Church

The Cook Islands Christian Church, which joined the WCC fellowship in 1975, has withdrawn from membership in the WCC, preferring to remain ecumenically engaged in the Pacific region. The committee was thankful that every effort was made to encourage the church to remain a WCC member church; and still encourages the church to be part of the ecumenical family.

The recommendations that

9. *The central committee **receive** with regret the decision of the Cook Islands Christian Church to resign its membership in the fellowship of WCC according to Rule I.6.a; **express** its appreciation for 46 years of membership in the WCC and **encourage** the church to maintain a connection with the WCC and the ecumenical movement.*

were approved by consensus.

B. Church of Jesus Christ on Earth by His Special Envoy Simon Kimbangu

The central committee, at its meeting in 2016, decided to suspend the membership of the Church of Jesus Christ on Earth by his Special Envoy Simon Kimbangu (Kimbanguist Church) for theological reasons, as provide by Rule I.6.b.ii. In spite of every effort for reconciliation and unity, including the efforts of the All Africa Conference of Churches, there were no possibilities for a constructive solution. The committee expressed concern about the theology of the church, but also appreciation for the process undertaken by the WCC to find a way forward. Following the advice of both the permanent

committee on consensus and collaboration and the executive committee, the policy reference committee recognizes the need to complete the suspension by discontinuing the membership of the Kimbanguist Church (Rule I.6.c).

The recommendation that

10. *The central committee **decide*** that the period of suspension and continuing efforts has concluded and will not be renewed, and the *Church of Jesus Christ on Earth by His Special Envoy Simon Kimbangu (Kimbanguist Church)* is no longer to be considered a member church of the WCC.

was approved by consensus.

VII. Recognition as a specialized ministry in a working relationship with the WCC

A. International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC)

Mr Constantine M. Triantafilou, executive director of the International Orthodox Christian Charities, presented the request of the IOCC for recognition as a specialized ministry in a working relationship with the WCC according to Rule XVI to the committee. The WCC and the IOCC are already strong partners and the committee was thankful for this opportunity to formalize cooperation.

The recommendations that

11. *The central committee **recognize** the International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) as a specialized ministry in a working relationship with the WCC according to Rule XVI, having taken note that the objectives of the IOCC are consistent with the functions and purposes of the Council and the IOCC expressed desire to relate to and cooperate with the WCC; and*
12. *The central committee **request** the general secretary to invite the International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) to nominate a delegated representative to the WCC 11th Assembly in 2022 in accordance with Rule XVI.*

were approved by consensus.

B. Amity Foundation

Ms Wei (Vivian) Zheng of the Amity Foundation presented the request of the Amity Foundation for recognition as a specialized ministry in a working relationship with the WCC according to Rule XVI to the committee. The Amity Foundation is already cooperating with the WCC and many member churches and maintains an office at the ecumenical centre in Geneva.

The recommendations that

13. *The central committee **recognize** the Amity Foundation as a specialized ministry in a working relationship with the WCC according to Rule XVI, having taken note that the objectives of the Amity Foundation are consistent with the functions and purposes of the Council and Amity's expressed desire to relate to and continue cooperation with the WCC; and*
14. *The central committee **request** the general secretary to invite the Amity Foundation to nominate a delegated representative to the WCC 11th Assembly in 2022 in accordance with Rule XVI.*

were approved by consensus.

VIII. Pending membership applications

The following churches have expressed strong interest to join the WCC seeking closer fellowship and greater unity in Christ. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, visits to churches applying for membership in the WCC have not been possible in the last period. The interest of churches in Africa to join the WCC is an opportunity for discernment and reflection on relationships, the history of the church in Africa, the impact of colonialism and interfaith dynamics. Visits will take place as soon as possible.

During the brief discussion it was confirmed that all these churches have a complete application. They all meet the criteria for membership and the applications will next be going to the permanent committee and collaboration for consideration. They could not be visited in the last period because of restrictions due to the pandemic.

The recommendation that

15. *The central committee **request** the general secretary to issue invitations to the following churches to nominate a delegated observer to the WCC 11th Assembly in 2022, recognizing the churches' strong interest to join the WCC fellowship of member churches:*
    - *Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria*
    - *Celica Church of Christ [Nigeria]*
    - *Church of Central Africa Presbyterian [Malawi]*
    - *Overcoming Faith Centre Church of Kenya*
    - *Apostolic Pentecostal Church (APC) International [Liberia]*
    - *The Eternal Sacred Order of the Cherubim and Seraphim [Nigeria]*

was approved by consensus.

The full report of the policy reference committee was adopted by consensus.

After a break, H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios moderated a hearing session.

2.6. Report of the Communications Committee

Ms Miriam Weibye, moderator of the committee, presented the report along with the rapporteurs, Rev. Dr Angelique Walker-Smith and Ms Hanbeet Rhee.

The committee had reflected on WCC communications since 2018, presently in 2021 looking forward to the WCC 11th Assembly and beyond. In addition to the documents listed in the report there were other communications reports that allowed the communications committee to engage with specific communications projects that were not covered in the documents. These helped to inform the committee's reflections. Ms Weibye thanked the communications team here at WCC and throughout the fellowship who continue to put in extraordinary efforts in enabling our communications. She also expressed gratitude to the members of the communications committee for their time and energy in the last few days.

1. Moderator's Address (GEN 01)

The communications committee affirmed and received the Moderator's Address with gratitude. The committee:

1) Appreciated the moderator's references to our WCC legacy and our resilience to "stay together" despite challenges even at the earliest formation of the WCC after WWII.
2) Celebrated the role of communications in helping to facilitate a virtual "gathering place" for the global fellowship, in the absence of limited in-person gatherings due to the pandemic that has affected all of us, highlighted by the moderator. The communications committee noted this virtual "gathering place" should be a place that seeks to address the economic and geographic gaps that divide us, as identified in the moderator's report. At the same time, we recognized the limits of equitable infrastructure and lack of hardware in certain places in the world that prevent and limit engagement in this "gathering place."
3) Affirmed the reference to tools and resources as pathways for mutual conversations among the fellowship. Biblical and theological reflection, ecumenical learning and formation, stories, best

practices, regional sharing and discovery, issues and a host of resources can commend and support the fellowship of the churches and their partners.

4) The communications committee expressed continued concern for the inequity of access to vaccines and the disparity of ways people will experience "being safe" at home during central committee meetings and at the assembly. There was concern about the "global south" being less present in the assembly as a result, in addition to concerns about equitable access to visas and country regulations. Committee members affirmed the role of the German churches and government to assist with this in order to protect life first and foremost, whether the assembly is small, medium, or large.

The recommendation

1. *That the central committee **affirm** and **receive** the observations of the communication committee concerning the Moderator's Address.*

was approved by consensus.

2. Report of the Executive Committee (GEN 02)

The communications committee affirmed and received the Report of the Executive Committee with gratitude. The committee:

1) Celebrated the work of staff in helping to facilitate a virtual "gathering place" for the executive committee to do its work, in the absence of limited in-person gatherings due to the pandemic.
2) Celebrated the communications staff team in their work ensuring that the WCC play its role as a convener and facilitator of a virtual "gathering place" for the member churches, related partners and networks.
3) Acknowledged and is grateful for the work of the communications committee and the related WCC staff team in preparing the WCC Communications Strategy, adopted by the central committee in 2018, that positioned us for increased work via virtual platforms. This includes an updated website, over 130 webinars and updated digital archives that have increased virtual traffic to WCC by 50%-70%.
4) Noted that the Constitution only allows an election of a general secretary in person but also acknowledged this has been difficult for the candidates for the general secretary.
5) Expressed concern for the limitations of time zones that have limited the participation of some in our fellowship, as well as the challenges of technology access and inequities. Perhaps there can be creative ways to think about this going forward.

The recommendation

2. *That the central committee **affirm** and **receive** the observations of the communications committee concerning the Report of the Executive Committee.*

was approved by consensus.

3. Report of the Acting General Secretary (GEN 03)

The communications committee affirmed and received the Report of the Acting General Secretary with gratitude. The committee:

1) Appreciated that the executive committee appointed an acting general secretary.
2) Expressed gratitude for the leadership of our acting general secretary who has ably led us during this past season.
3) Expressed appreciation to our immediate past general secretary for his opening devotions at the beginning of our central committee meeting, and for his leadership over past years.

4) Highlighted the regular acting general secretary's accountability reports, supported by communications staff, that help to keep the fellowship connected. These have been much appreciated by committee members.
5) Celebrated the engagements with the fellowship identified in the AGS report.

The recommendation

3. *That the central committee **affirm** and **receive** the observations of the communication committee concerning the Report of the Acting General Secretary.*

was approved by consensus.

4. Overview of Matters for Referral and Decision (GEN 05)

This overview presented the matters for decision for referral to the central committee standing committees. It was a resource for the communications committee to interface with other standing committees. The communications committee received items from other committee members, and they have been incorporated into this report. We are grateful for these contributions to the communications committee's work and report presentation.

5. Update on the report From Busan to Karlsruhe (GEN COM 02) and From Busan to Karlsruhe (GEN COM 03)

The report *From Busan to Karlsruhe* recounts the journey of the WCC since the last assembly in 2013. It is the story of a fellowship of churches committed to moving together on the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. The bulk of this report has already been written including the experience of the pandemic but will be finalized later this year.

The communications committee identified the following as proposals for strengthening the report:

1) Women's Pilgrimage
2) Youth Pilgrimage
3) Addition of comments from the presidents, perhaps in a related video as well as in the text
4) Creation of a trailer for the report, inviting people to read and engage with it
5) More highlighting of "Thursdays in Black"
6) An index for the Report
7) Sharing of Best Practices
8) Reflection on the 10th Assembly's theme, "God of life, lead us to justice and peace" since the Busan Assembly is our point of accountability
9) "Inequalities" is named very generally. This may be too broad. "Racism and other inequalities" are recommended. Racism is used only in limited places. Page 10 is particularly noted
10) Strengthen the theme of reconciliation.

The recommendations

4. *That the central committee **affirm** the revised draft of From Busan to Karlsruhe (GEN COM 03); **affirm** the revised timeline 2021; and **forward** the document to the executive committee for action to finalize the report; and*
5. *That the central committee will also **underline** in the report the role and the importance of the younger generation and the new methodologies within the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace in the midst of the pandemic, reference should especially be made to the regional pilgrimage visits, e.g. Women's Pilgrimage in Korea 2020.*

were approved by consensus.

6. Accountability report on Central Committee 2018 actions

The communications committee underlined the vital role played by communications, especially in a time of pandemic, in linking together the fellowship, strengthening mutual relationships and partnerships, igniting hope for a world where human dignity prevails, and raising the fellowship's visibility and public role, and promoting WCC programmes and advocacy.

The recommendation

6. *That the central committee **affirm** and **receive** the observations of the communications committee concerning the communications staff and its work regarding these programmes to advance our visibility.*

was approved by consensus.

7. Update on assembly communication

The communications committee received an update on assembly communications and discussed preparations for the assembly. The committee reflected on the importance of the fellowship engaging in mutual communication towards the assembly at grassroots level, as well as central communications efforts from the WCC staff. The committee highlighted the importance of youth engagement especially in assembly preparations

With a few amendments in the wording, the recommendations

7. *That the central committee **celebrate** the importance given to youth engagement both in the preparation and promotion of the assembly, through the communications strategy; and*
8. *That the central committee **ask** the acting general secretary, through the WCC communications department, to encourage and stimulate 1) national grassroots initiatives of promotion of the assembly and 2) potential engagement of groups, delegates and especially communications teams from member churches in the event itself.*

were approved by consensus.

8. WCC Communication Strategy 2018-2021, addendum 2022 (GEN COM 03)

The WCC communications strategy was approved by the executive committee in November 2018. Though the timelines have changed, the strategy remains well-aligned with the overall strategy of the WCC and it has served the WCC well in adapting to an increase in online activities. Although it requires minor amendments to reflect assembly communications plans and to extend the strategy to 2022.

H.E. Metropolitan Seraphim cautioned that the communications for the assembly must remain within the budget and available funds.

The recommendation

9. *That the central committee **approve** the addendum 2022 to the already approved communication strategy 2018-2021 and its direction until the next WCC assembly.*

was approved by consensus.

9. New WCC Communications Paper for the 21st Century

In its report to the central committee in June 2018, the communications committee recommended the "production of a new communications paper for the 21st century which addresses the theme of 'communicating love, unity and credibility' and that follows the importance of previous statements of the WCC in 1968 and the 1983 statement on 'Communicating Credibly'".

According to the existing WCC Communications Framework, communications must have participation and hope at its core. This paper "New WCC Communications Paper for the 21st Century", will briefly

review the two communications statements that emerged at previous assemblies before focusing on the forthcoming 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe. Specifically, the task is to provide hope for a different world in which human dignity is strengthened. The WCC should not only focus on strategies to communicate the pilgrimage of justice and peace, but also reflect on the role of communication in building just and peaceful communities.

Prof. Dr Enns asked for clarification on the role of communication in building just and peaceful communities. He said that the pilgrimage of justice and peace (PJP) is the overall guide on the work of the council. Ms Weibye responded that WCC should not only be focusing on communicating our programme of the pilgrimage as it were, but should also use our communication in building just and peaceful communities. The committee felt that it is not just about taking the programme of the pilgrimage of justice and peace as a branded initiative, but also looking at how communications can contribute to making the world better, as the PJP programme intends.

The communications committee was also informed of the planned symposium in September 2021 on "Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age," which will inform the new paper.

Clarification was provided that this will be a paper, not a statement, which might overlap with public issues and that it would go to the executive committee for approval before coming to the central committee.

The recommendations

10. *That the central committee **reaffirm** the communications committee proposal that a "new communications paper for the 21st century" be presented to the WCC 11th Assembly, with a draft to come to the meeting of the central committee in early 2022; and*

11. *That the central committee **ask** the acting general secretary to appoint a small group, including members of the communications committee, to produce a draft report, taking into account the theme of the assembly and the results of the symposium on "Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age," to be shared with the executive committee for approval before presentation to the central committee in 2022.*

were approved by consensus.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios thanked the presenters and the members of the communications committee for their good work.

The full report was adopted by consensus.

2.7. Closing Remarks and Prayer

Dr Abuom thanked all those who have laboured to put these reports together, especially the moderators and rapporteurs of committees, and the central committee members for their participation in the day's plenary session. With regard to the next in-person meeting of the central committee, she encouraged all who plan to participate to get vaccinated against the coronavirus. The vaccines approved for Switzerland would be communicated to the members the following day. A negative PCR test also allows for entry into the country.

The central committee closed its session with prayer focused on Christ's love and compassion for life.

3. 29 June Plenary

Dr Agnes Abuom welcomed all to the last day of the central committee meeting. She said the leadership of the central committee had been very encouraged by the participation in the regional meetings, in the standing committees and in plenary. The session would include sharing from the regional meetings and then presentation of the remaining committee reports for decision.

3.1. Opening Prayer

The prayer focused on Christ's love and the bond of Christian unity and the churches' common witness. The scripture reading was Ephesians 4:1-6.

3.2. Message from H.H. Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, Karekin II

The moderator announced that there would be a message from the WCC president from the Oriental Orthodox Family, His Holiness Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, Karekin II.

During his message, the patriarch extended his greetings and blessings to the central committee. He said that in this period, the agenda of the WCC member churches includes the organization of the 11th WCC Assembly, which should also be an opportunity to come together and to study the problems and issues that the Christian churches are facing in order to find appropriate solutions in the spirit and according to the needs of the modern era. He added his appreciation for the central committee and WCC staff for the work done for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, as well as for prayers for and support to the Armenian people and to the Armenian apostolic Church during and after the recent 44 day war in Artsakh. He said that the Armenian Church and the Armenian people need the support and prayers of their Christian brothers and sisters. In conclusion he offered prayers for a fruitful meeting of the central committee and a blessing.

Dr Abuom thanked His Holiness for the greeting and message to the central committee and for reemphasizing the need for prayer for the Armenian people following the war.

She added that a message from Christian Aid had also been received but that this would be addressed by the secretariat because of time constraints.

3.3. Regional Meetings, Part 2

Bishop Mary Ann Swenson moderated a hearing session and echoed that the ecumenical family is holding in prayer our Armenian brothers and sisters for the particular pain and suffering they are experiencing.

3.3.1. Middle East

Very Rev. Prof. Dr Jack Khalil (Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East) presented from the Middle East regional meeting. The group had exchanged news and experiences from the churches in the region. The general secretary of the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC), Dr Michael Abs, made a presentation on the regional situation during the regional group meeting. Fr Khalil thanked all who had contributed to the report including Dr Theodora Issa (Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East) who prepared the PowerPoint presentation.

Whilst COVID-19 and its challenges are the number one concern around the world, the Middle East has other dominating challenges. The following are some of the challenges that face the Middle East, and might have the negative impact on the tapestry of the Middle East:

The social and demographic changes in the Middle East brought with them power struggles, changes in social and political structures, and confusion in all areas of social life, all of which can be seen in the region. There is a high population growth in the Arab world caused by high birth rates and prolonged life spans. This high birth rate of some denominations is causing a drastic change in the demographics and the balance of power in the Middle East.

Though living in the Middle East, youth have been raised in a globalized world that is dominated by television and internet images from both the West and media powerhouses, which is now dominating and overtaking the original civilization and culture. Some of the younger generation were educated at western universities, and have been influenced by the western values, thus find themselves living with an internal conflict. Therefore, youth always seek better standards of living, accountability from their governments, and respect for human rights, issues that might not fit with the ongoing trends in the Middle East.

Some Christians have been uprooted from their homeland, while some have returned, the majority have settled in other countries. Migration is most dominant in the Levant, where nearly two-thirds of youths are actively considering leaving their homeland. Whilst the wars, discrimination and persecution played their role in this issue, recent research indicates that economic factors and corruption in their countries are the main reasons behind the decision to migrate. Palestinian refugee camps have become overcrowded and the situation became more challenging after the arrival of COVID-19. All these issues are negatively impacting the presence of Christians in the Middle East, their homeland.

As of 2018, an estimated 18.6 million people in the region are living on less than $1.90 per day. Extreme poverty in Syria increased from almost zero to more than 20%, while in Yemen, extreme poverty more than doubled to reach 41% in 2015. In the Middle East and North Africa region, youth unemployment rates have exceeded 25% since 1991. With governments in the Middle East unable to deliver basic services and opportunities, young people are turning to extreme religious affiliations, sectarian, and ethnic organizations to fill the void.

In terms of the Christian presence in the region, there are continuing decreases. The Lebanese Christian population has shrunk because of the Lebanese civil war, and the lower birth rate in the Lebanese Christian population. In Syria Christians are a minority and represent approximately 10 percent of the population. Around 1.4 million Christians in Iraq were counted in a 1987 Iraqi government census. Today, there are thought to be between 200,000 and 300,000 Christians left. Churches continue to be destructed in Mosul, and Christians are unable to return and rebuild. In Palestine between 2001 and 2005, more than 3,000 out of 25,000 Christians left the Bethlehem District alone. Since then, an estimated 700-900 Christians leave Palestine each year.

This pandemic came to the Middle East, a region already exhausted with wars and uncertainty, thus, this pandemic added to the misery of the Middle East. The Christians and the churches have and continue to deal with the emerging and never-ending challenges of social, economic, and religious nature.

Bishop Swenson thanked the group for the thorough and very comprehensive report from the region.

3.3.2. North America

The president from the region, Archbishop Mark Macdonald (Anglican Church of Canada), shared from the North America regional meeting. He greeted the central committee in the language of the Anishinaabe nation – a greeting directed to relatives and in a spiritual and legal framework which predates the arrival of people from Europe with an invitation to establish a relationship as relatives.

He spoke about the recent revelations of finding of remains of First Nations children in Kamloups, British Columbia and in Saskatchewan. These were children who were unaccounted for, victims of a school system that, although they were baptized children, no doubt they did not receive a Christian burial. They are the residue of a genocidal system that paved the way for enslavement of millions and the destruction of the environment that we are now seeing.

With the George Floyd killing, the question of race and the way that has played out in the Americas, is an important issue in Canada and US and has now become a moral and political issue.

These issues and concern for the environment have intersections that have to do with trauma and poverty in the US and Canada; poverty that is masked by people whose wealth is created by the poverty. Gender justice and a number of other issues were also discussed in the regional meeting.

He concluded by saying that online pilgrimage of justice and peace visits to Winnipeg, Minneapolis, Standing Rock and the Arctic had taken place. There was a really good engagement with issues and these visits allowed us to enter deeply into a number of things that we probably would not have been able to see if we had had a physical pilgrimage. He thanked the committee for the opportunity to share form the region.

Bishop Swenson thanked the archbishop for alerting the committee to the pain in the region. She added that the central committee members, their churches and the two national councils of churches are working together in the region to try and address our issues together and to be in unity and reconciliation.

3.3.3. Caribbean

Rev. Karl Johnson (Jamaica Baptist Union) presented the report from the Caribbean regional group meeting. The members from the Caribbean community cherished the opportunity to come together, albeit virtually. They reflected on how the pandemic impacted the region by unmasking the inequities that have plagued the region for centuries. In addition to the pandemic's impact on church and worship life, it has devastated the economies, education system, families, and health sector. In addition to the negative effects of the pandemic, Haiti continues to experience tremendous suffering caused by political instability and poverty and St. Vincent & the Grenadines recently suffered from a volcanic eruption.

There were also stories of resilience, faithfulness and creativity. While the pace at which vaccinations were produced is heartening, the matter of limited access of vaccines by the region was of great concern. The region is aware of some of efforts of advocacy by the WCC as it relates to the equitable distribution of the vaccine and urges the Council to continue to increase its work in this area.

The Caribbean regional group meeting revisited a longstanding desire for autonomy of representation as a WCC region. The region recognizes that its contribution to the ecumenical life in the fellowship has been clearly demonstrated throughout the years and in light of the language and cultural differences

and regional concerns, it is felt that the region should not be paired with Latin America but be recognized as an autonomous region within the WCC.

He concluded by sharing that there is an initiative by the Caribbean Conference of Churches (CCC) general secretary to appoint a small committee to mobilize the process of the renewal of the regional ecumenical engagement in the Caribbean.

Bishop Swenson thanked the group for the report and the challenges for the WCC.

3.3.4. Europe

Rev. Sarah Moore (United Reformed Church) shared from the Europe regional meeting, moderated by the WCC president for the region, Archbishop Emeritus Dr Anders Wejryd. The group looked at the regional work which is being done both through WCC and the Conference of European Churches (CEC) in Europe, and addressed in particular the situation that might come after and out of the COVID pandemic. The meeting learned further about preparations for the assembly in Karlsruhe in 2022. WCC staff members updated the meeting about WCC work in and impacting on the European region.

A CEC-organised pre-assembly meeting for European participants will take place in February 2022 in Warsaw. It will reflect on how European churches can contribute to world Christianity from an increasingly secular context alongside the old tensions rekindling tensions between and within some states alongside many more positive developments. The importance of the ministry of peace and reconciliation was emphasised.

The churches gathering in Karlsruhe will be a tired and wounded fellowship looking for fellowship, solidarity and direction during these times. Churches are troubled but not destroyed having faced a range of challenges as a result of this global health crisis.

Post pandemic a range of new opportunities will exist for churches in Europe and around the world. It will be important to overcome the temptation to remain self-occupied in our nations and region and build international solidarity. There was some tension around discussions about post-COVID, when COVID seems like it is here to stay. Amidst the many questions and confusion around this the churches need to find ways to live with COVID. Solidarity is a tool to help us to respond and to support each other and our people.

The Europe meeting concluded with a series of questions. What should be our word in these times? How could this pandemic of death be transformed into a pandemic of faith? How can these times of death be transformed into a time of life and peace? How can WCC be a sustainable organisation? What have we learned from this time of pandemic? How do we welcome and benefit from different types of knowledge to form the WCC in the future? How do the projects in process e.g. the Green Village shape future programme priorities and the overall WCC strategy?

Finally the group reflected that there is an opportunity for Christian churches in Europe to strengthen the understanding that as Christians we have gone beyond death. This is a time of major importance for Europe. We need hope because we believe in life so the world might be healed.

Bishop Swenson thanked the group for its reflections. Before the regional sharing was completed, Dr Abuom asked Rt Rev. Dhiloraj Ranjit Canagasabey (Church of Ceylon) to offer a prayer particularly to the situation of residential schools the impact of children who were never heard.

Following the prayer Dr Abuom thanked him as well as Bishop Mary Ann Swenson for moderating the session on the sharing from the regional group meetings.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios moderated a decision session. Fr Sauca confirmed that there were 110 members and presidents present which constituted a quorum.

Further work was done to complete the report of the communications committee. The results are reflected in the previous section. H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios thanked the moderator, Ms Miriam Weibye, and the committee for its work.

3.4 Report of the Finance Policy Committee

H.E. Archbishop Dr Vicken Aykazian (Armenian Apostolic Church [Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin]), moderated the committee and introduced the report. He expressed his delight in seeing the other central committee members and hoped to be able to come together face-to-face very soon. He said that the committee worked well, in a very friendly atmosphere. The committee shared in the grief carried by its fellow member, Archbishop Mark MacDonald, on the most recent news of the discovery of remains of children in the grounds of the Marieval Indian Residential School near the Cowessess First Nation. He hoped that these kinds of atrocities will disappear from this world. He appreciated the commitment of the members to decision-making through online work. He recognized that the work of director of finance, Ms Elaine Dykes, and her staff in assisting the committee. He commended the work of the steering committee for the Green Village real estate development project. He thanked the committee members for the work and asked the rapporteur, Mr Carlos Peña (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) to read the recommendations.

1. Moderator's address

In terms of the pertinent challenges of today described by the moderator, the committee noted in particular the increase in violence to women and children, experienced in communities as a result of COVID-19 conditions, as a matter requiring response from the churches. Another challenge was that of racism. The committee noted with approval that even in a year of financial uncertainties, a new programmatic initiative for overcoming racism had been approved in 2020.

The recommendation that

1. *the central committee **receive** the report, with sincere thanks for the service and leadership of the moderator*

was approved by consensus.

2. Report of the acting general secretary

The recommendation

2. *That the central committee **receive** the report, in gratitude for the wisdom and commitment of the acting general secretary, who had been called to serve for an interim period which was far longer than initially anticipated.*

was approved by consensus.

3. Report of the executive committee

The finance policy committee considered that executive committee had delivered remarkable and excellent work in unprecedented circumstances, in 2020 – June 2021. It was discussed why no action had been taken by central committee, when executive committee had proposed an amendment to the Rules to permit postal or electronic voting by central committee, on questions which executive committee might have considered as "urgent, important and to be decided by central committee", in

the period, and before central committee could meet. It was thought likely that one reason may simply have been the challenge of communication through the electronic platform.

The finance policy committee members affirmed their willingness to participate in the governance process by electronic means, in this challenging period, recognizing the need, and possible requirement for a strategy to address postponed business, should it be required. Recognizing the fiduciary responsibility that rests with the governing bodies on behalf of the churches for the stability and vitality of the World Council of Churches as a whole, the committee discussed the importance of ensuring that all available means be employed to enable the central committee to address pending business during this term.

After some discussion it was agreed that the recommendation 4 below should ask the previously appointed working group rather than mandate a new group to work on the constitution and rules.

The recommendations that the central committee:

3. ***receive*** *the report, with gratitude for all that had been accomplished by executive committee, and under its guidance and monitoring;*
4. ***ask*** *the working group on constitution and rules, appointed by the central committee in 2018, to review rules related to remote decision-making and electronic meetings, including reconsideration of pending proposals for amendments to the rules, evaluation of experience with the various electronic means employed by the WCC, and consideration of technologies available to the global membership, in order to propose ways to address pending matters of central committee and bring coherence to various pending proposals for amendments to the related rules.*

were approved by consensus.

4. Update on finance (GEN FIN 02)

The finance policy committee expressed gratitude for the solidarity of member churches and ecumenical partners, both for financial contributions received, and for other participation in the work, during the time of the pandemic.

Since the last central committee meeting and especially since the pandemic struck, WCC has adapted its plans, delivering programmatic activities through new ways of working. Regular financial monitoring remains important in the light of prolonged impacts of the pandemic.

Further to the decision of executive committee in May 2021, and following significant changes to the 2021 approved budget assumptions, a revised budget 2021 will be prepared and issued in July 2021 and will reflect the following considerations:

a) Continued travel restrictions;
b) Revised income and expenditure assumptions for the Bossey hotel and conference centre;
c) Postponement of the face-to-face meeting of central committee to 2022;
d) Revisions to the assembly budget; and
e) The expected sale of the Kyoto land plot in mid-2021 (Green Village project).

The finance policy committee recommended that in planning for the future, particular emphasis should be placed on hybrid activities, with consultations by electronic means as well as in-person, resulting in cost efficiencies (less travel costs), as well as lower carbon impact, compared to previously used face-to-face models. In addition, consideration should be given in budgeting online meetings, as to how costs or access to infrastructure might be addressed, as a matter of expense policy, for participants suffering unequal access to IT devices and internet services.

The recommendations that the central committee:

5. ***receive*** *the update on finance;*
6. ***require*** *that executive committee monitor the approach adopted to foster inclusiveness in participation when digital means are adopted.*

were approved by consensus.

5. Outline budget for the 11th Assembly (GEN FIN 02, appendix 2)

The outline budget presented (for 2018-2023, including reporting) reported expenditure of CHF 15.1 million, including a contingency of CHF 1.1 million. It was presented as a balanced budget, provided the income profile included was fully realised.

The committee reviewed the risk register presented, and noted the following:

a) Risk, judged low, of a reduction in the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs (GMFA) grant 1 (2021: CHF 3.3 million), which had now received provisional approval;
a) Risk, judged medium, of receiving a reduced level, rather than the full level of GMFA grant 2 (2022: CHF 3.3 million) subject to parliamentary approval in 2022, and considered particularly challenging for WCC in terms of its own commitments, given the fact that no decision would be announced concerning grant 2 at the time of budget approval in November 2021;
b) The level of the EKD grant for the assembly, estimated at CHF 1.7 million, is yet to be formally confirmed, and could therefore be lower;
c) Risk of reduced participation from member churches if the capacity to reimburse travel and accommodation costs is impacted by reduced incoming grants, as above; and
d) Other finance impacts from travel and sanitary risks related to the on-going pandemic.

The finance policy committee discussed whether investment should be made in advanced conferencing technology, in order to plan for assembly participation by digital means. It was noted that under Swiss law, a hybrid participation for decision-making, in which certain members were present face-to-face, while others participated electronically, was not considered valid.

The recommendation

7. *That central committee* ***require*** *that the assembly budget be further developed for approval by executive committee in November 2021, with continued close collaboration with the host churches concerning the assessment of risks.*

was approved by consensus.

6. WCC financial strategy 2018-2021, Addendum 2022 (GEN FIN 03)

The committee received with appreciation the addendum, with the financial and operational objectives for 2022, as well as performance indicators. The WCC financial strategy 2018-2021 (June 2018, GEN FIN 07) is an integral part of the WCC strategic plan, and sets out how WCC aims to remain a sustainable organisation, now and in the longer-term. For WCC, the conditions for sustainability are listed as follows, and remain unchanged for the additional year of the planning period:

- Member churches are committed, and are both planning and participating in the project work;
- Effective and innovative communication and reporting is shared, illustrating the impact of project work, so that funds can be raised effectively;
- Competent staff are attracted, managed and retained;
- There is adequate administrative and financial infrastructure.

The introduction of a new operational objective concerning proactive management of change was met with approval, in recognition of all that is already in a process of evolution, with regard to

methodologies, and IT systems; and what is to come, concerning preparation for new initiatives after the assembly, changes in staff leadership and removal from the Ecumenical Centre.

The recommendation that the central committee:

8. ***approve*** *the addendum 2022 with the inclusion of the two points above, extending the period of the WCC financial strategy 2018-2021, including the income development strategy, to the year 2022; and defining financial and operational objectives for that year, with performance indicators.*

was approved by consensus.

7. WCC financial strategy 2018-2021, Addendum 2022 (GEN FIN 03) – ref 12 Financial management of the real estate project

The policy on investments was last reviewed and issued by the central committee in July 2014, when, amongst other updates, general ethical guidelines were extended to exclude investment in fossil fuels.

In particular, the formulation of the investment objectives for both the General Fund (CHF 7 million, 31.12.20) and the Endowment Investment Fund (CHF 8 million, 31.12.20) are set down in the investment policy. The investment policy does not address or define an investment objective for the particular circumstances which may occur from this summer, and until 2023-2024, when proceeds from a land sale may be received and held for a certain time, until re-investment in the Lima building.

Staff reported that investment proposals are currently under review from banks, such proposals offering the opportunity of a modest return, while retaining a low-risk investment profile, and in compliance with ethical guidelines, including investment in the form of environmental, social and governance (ESG) bond funds, for example.

The recommendations that central committee:

9. ***delegate*** *to executive committee the revision of the investment objectives in the investment policy for this particular circumstance; and*
10. ***ask*** *that executive committee approve investment guidelines for new short-term investments which may be required; and ensure that investments are managed under mandates with investment managers, as required by policy.*

were approved by consensus.

8. Update on Green Village (GEN FIN 04)

The committee concurred with the general direction of the work of the steering committee, and the decisions of executive committee, and was encouraged by the results for the Montreal residential building, and by the prospect of the sale of the land and project, Kyoto, in summer 2021.

With reference to the financial and operational objectives listed in the addendum for 2022 (GEN FIN 03), the finance policy committee noted the extent of the commitments for next year, which included:

- Capital expenditure plan for Lima, for first review with the executive committee in 2022, together with financing plan
- Implementation of plan for removal to Lima, with milestones during 2022
- Monitoring of the building project funds by the finance sub-committee
- Preparation of the Lima building permit, with input from WCC staff, staff of sister organisations and tenants, and the steering committee
- Funding appeal for the renovation of the ecumenical chapel and the main building, classified by the heritage department in 2018.

There was a question about specifically naming the Lutheran World Federation in the proposed recommendations given that the WCC could encourage other churches and ecumenical partners to consider buying space. This approach was affirmed, and as discussions have already taken place with the LWF, it is specifically mentioned.

The recommendations that the central committee:

11. ***express*** *gratitude to the steering committee and the executive committee for the work undertaken in leadership of the complex Green Village project, and for the achievements in this period;*
12. ***affirm*** *the decisions taken by executive committee and the guidance shared by the steering committee since June 2018;*
13. ***welcome*** *the interest of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in owning office space in the Lima building, with the sign of hope that this implies for our long-term ecumenical collaboration in Geneva; and*
14. ***encourage*** *the next steps in the studies for Lima building with LWF, together with the plan to move with LWF to the Kyoto building in 2023.*

were approved by consensus.

H.E. Archbishop Vicken added his appreciation of the work of the steering committee for the Green Village real estate development project. Working on this group is a very heavy responsibility and the committee members have shown themselves to be very dedicated.

The full report was adopted by consensus.

3.4. Report of the Programme Committee

Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber expressed her thanks and appreciation to the members of the programme committee for the magnificent work they have done in a very short time online. She said that was only possible because of the careful preparations and the professional support of the staff whom she also thanked. She added her special thanks to the committee's rapporteurs, Rev. Dr Henriette Hutabarat-Lebang and Rev. Karin van den Broeke (Protestant Church in the Netherlands).

The rapporteurs read through the recommendations of the report.

A. Moderator's Address (Doc. No. GEN 01)

The programme committee welcomed and discussed the Moderator's Address as a rich reflection on the current situation of the fellowship of churches and on the challenges and opportunities in today's world and in times of the pandemic.

The programme committee mentioned that, as we are aware of a rise in islamophobia, a rise in antisemitism and of persecutions of Christians during the pandemic, we also have to be aware of increasing polarization in and between churches. The programme committee discussed the huge importance of religious freedom and highlighted the need for greater attention to growing christianophobia, especially in the Middle East, Northern Africa and Asia.

The committee also highlighted the need for attention and prayer after the recent spike in violence and geopolitical commotion in the Caucasus, specifically the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war, instigated by Azerbaijan and Turkey, against Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, which resulted in the loss of life, land, and regional security.

The committee expressed concern for Myanmar. The committee added Ethiopia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Middle East (especially the current situation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories) as conflict areas that need our special attention.

Moving together with faith communities in addressing the pandemic is an ongoing duty and opportunity.

The recommendations that the central committee:

1. ***receive*** *the Moderator's Address with appreciation as a rich reflection on the current situation;*
2. ***thank*** *the moderator and the leadership team for the work done under the very special COVID-19 circumstances;*
3. ***highlight*** *the historical ecumenical legacy providing lessons to draw from as we seek to keep the momentum of the ecumenical movement and* ***underline*** *the concluding remarks: 'we are committed to move together' in patience and hope;*
4. ***affirm*** *the following programme priorities coming from the address of the moderator:*
    - *overcoming racism and discrimination;*
    - *building trust and relationships with and in faith-communities and faith-based communities by meeting each other and moving together;*
    - *the importance of the input and presence of indigenous people;*
    - *resilience of the church in the world.*

were approved by consensus.

B. Report of the Acting General Secretary (Doc. No. GEN 03)

The recommendations that the central committee:

5. ***receive*** *the report with appreciation;*
   approved by consensus
6. ***thank*** *the acting general secretary for the monthly accountability reports;*
   approved by consensus
7. ***ask*** *the acting general secretary to inform the specialised ministries regarding important ecumenical developments;*
   approved by consensus
8. ***underline*** *the pilgrimage of justice and peace as strategic direction for WCC's programmatic work in the future;*
   approved by consensus
9. ***thank*** *the acting general secretary and the staff for doing excellent work during this challenging time of the pandemic.*

were approved by consensus.

C. Report of the executive committee (GEN 02)

The programme committee received and discussed the report of the executive committee. The committee discussed the status of the document 'Called to Transformative Action: Ecumenical Diakonia' and concluded that this document is available as a working resource for internal use, as per request, for member churches and ecumenical partners. The document is referred to the central committee meeting in 2022 for discussion and approval as a resource document. An additional chapter on the diaconal work of the churches in the context of the pandemic will be added and will also be presented to the central committee in 2022 for approval.

The much appreciated Pilgrim Team Visit (PTV) to Papua is mentioned in the committee as an example of the importance of PTV's.

The recommendations that the central committee:

10. ***receive*** *the Report of the executive committee (GEN 02) with appreciation;*
    approved by consensus
11. ***affirm*** *the importance of Pilgrim Team Visits as part of the methodology of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace;*
    approved by consensus
12. ***thank*** *the executive committee for the work done.*

were approved by consensus.

D. WCC Strategic Plan 2018-2021, addendum 2022 (GEN PRO 03)

The programme committee discussed the proposal to extend the period 2018-2021 of the WCC strategic plan, due to the pandemic, and received the addendum 2022. In 2018 the central committee approved the current WCC strategic plan 2018-2021 (Doc. No. GEN PRO 05). In view of the COVID-19 pandemic and the postponement of the assembly to 2022, an addendum is needed to add 2022 to the period 2018-2021. The framework of the strategic plan remains valid and continues to guide the work of the WCC in the midst of the pandemic.

The recommendations that the central committee:

13. ***extend*** *the period of the WCC strategic plan to include 2022, recognizing that the strategy has helped guide the responsiveness and adaptation needed in facing a global pandemic, and that the pilgrimage of justice and peace continues to be a strong strategic direction;*
14. ***ask*** *the executive committee to take into account the lessons learned during the pandemic, e.g. the opportunities for intensified communication by digital means;*
15. ***highlight*** *the importance of our work on overcoming racism, discrimination and xenophobia;*
    approved by consensus
16. ***ask*** *the executive committee to continue monitoring the implementation of the WCC Strategic Plan 2018-2022 with attention to the impact of the pandemic on the work of the WCC.*

were approved by consensus.

E. Report of the Assembly Planning Committee (GEN PRO 02)

The programme committee received the report of the assembly planning committee (APC) (Doc. No. GEN PRO 02) as a comprehensive and concise account of the work of the APC since the central committee met in 2018. The programme committee recognized the report as presenting a vision for an assembly deeply rooted in the theme, describing a coherence of daily themes and Bible texts, the experience of “a day in the life of the assembly” and the “building blocks” of the programme.

The committee discussed the concern for ecological justice, to be reflected during the assembly. Especially the input of the indigenous communities in taking care of the environment could be of great worth. This input could be reflected in the ecumenical conversations and in worship.

The committee also mentioned that corruption as a key factor in economic inequality and perpetuation of poverty need to be discussed by the body of Christ: common good vs. corruption and greed.

Racism needs to be named clearly along with white supremacy, matters which are inextricably linked. The committee made note of the possibility of having a pilgrim team visit as a pre-event in Berlin, organised by Africans and Africans in the diaspora. The Ecumenical Conversation 16 that deals with overcoming racism should take into account the Black Lives Matters movement.

The Arusha Call to transforming discipleship in secular society needs to be incorporated in several discussions during the assembly.

The committee discussed the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace (PJP), and ask the assembly planning committee to include an additional Ecumenical Conversation, called: 'Inspired by the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace – Moving together by the Love of Christ' (facilitated by members of the PJP reference group) and agreed to recommend this to the central committee.

The committee discussed the question of including 'gender-identity' in the ecumenical conversation 11 'Conversations on the Pilgrim Way: invitation to journey together on matters of human sexuality'. The committee underlined the need to have safe space to discuss sensitive questions on gender justice, gender identity and human sexuality in the Brunnen programme also.

The committee highlighted the necessity of Ecumenical Conversation 6 'Broadening the Dialogue on the Church' and especially mentioned the contacts with the Pentecostal movement.

The committee discussed the theme of the assembly: 'Christ's Love moves the world to reconciliation and unity' and noted that unity remains sensitive to diversity.

The committee discussed that concerns on increasing militarization should be part of EC 14 'Ecumenical Call to Just Peace: Holistic approaches to peacebuilding' and suggests the APC to add this aspect to the description. The committee should be aware of the decreasing number of Christians in the Middle East and of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

There was some discussion about how much the subjects of gender justice, gender identity and human sexuality will be discussed at the assembly. There is an ecumenical conversation on these issues but the APC has not discussed also including this in the Brunnen programme. Some of the documents referred to in the report have not been shared with the central committee members yet, e.g. Conversations on the Pilgrim Way.

Not all were agreed with the idea that unity remains sensitive to diversity in the discussion of the assembly theme.

There were central committee members who felt that the narrative parts of the committee reports should not be changed as they reflected the conversations in the committees and were not meant to be seen as statements. Others saw the need to ensure that all the central committee members agreed to the text as the final reports were reports of the central committee and not only the standing committees. The minority opinion of several members who did not agree with the text in this section of the Report of the Programme Committee is registered at the end of this section of the minutes.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios, in his role as moderator of the assembly planning committee, said that all these proposals will be reviewed at the next APC meeting in October.

Metropolitan Seraphim asked that *metanoia* be included in the assembly programmes, as the message of The Arusha Call.

With some changes in wording and one addition, the recommendations that the central committee:

*17. **receive** the report with appreciation;*

*18. **underline** that the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace is still the strategic direction of the programmatic work of the WCC, important for the spirituality of the fellowship and for the methodology and the thematic coherence of the assembly;*

19. ***ask*** *the Assembly Planning Committee to add one additional Ecumenical Conversation, called 'Inspired by the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace – Moving together by the Love of Christ'. This ecumenical conversation will show how the PJP process represents (1) a fresh approach to thinking and doing ecumenism, and (2) a new way of addressing issues of justice and peace as a spiritual journey in the company of hosting communities, which leads to the formulation of a theology of companionship and a vision of walking together for a greater unity;*
20. ***underline*** *the importance of co-working with member churches, specialised ministries and ecumenical and interreligious partners to increase ownership by participants and to harvest the wisdom of co-workers;*
21. ***include*** *concerns on increasing militarization should be part of EC 14 'Ecumenical Call to Just Peace: Holistic approaches to peacebuilding' and suggests the APC to add this aspect to the description;*
22. ***approve*** *the proposed programme as the "assembly agenda" for continued development and presentation to the assembly for action according to Rule IV.3;*
23. ***ask*** *the executive committee to ensure the development of the assembly programme toward the fulfilment of the mandate to make "provision for the conduct of its business, for worship and for study, and for common Christian commitment" (Article V.1.c.x.);*
24. ***ask*** *the working team for the 11th Assembly Europe Plenary on 2 September 2022 to liaise with the preparation team of the CEC Preparatory Meeting in order to ensure a comprehensive presentation of the situation of the European Region;*
25. ***thank*** *the Assembly Planning Committee for their passionate work already done.*

were approved by consensus.

The full report was adopted by consensus. The following members of the central committee did not agree to the narrative text in the section on the Report of the Assembly Planning Committee, and wished for their opinion to be noted in the report:

- H.G. Bishop ABRAHAM, Coptic Orthodox Church
- Prof. Dr Marina KOLOVOPOULOU, Church of Greece
- Dr Audeh B. QUAWAS, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

3.5. Report of the Governance and Nominations Committee

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios continued moderating the decision session and invited Bishop Simo Peura, who moderated the standing committee, to present the report. He thanked Rev. Martina Kopecká (Czechoslovak Hussite Church), the rapporteur, the committee members and the staff who participated. He said it was not always easy to reach agreement in the deliberations of the committee but that the committee had approved both the narrative text and recommendations by consensus through good discussions.

He continued that the first part of the committee's work was to receive the reports of the moderator, the acting general secretary and the executive committee. The second agenda was on nominations, the ordinary business the central committee regularly considers in its meeting. The third part of the work was assembly nominations which involved going over rules and principles for accepting additional delegates. The committee was assisted by assembly office staff.

Ms Celina Falk (Church of Sweden) read the recommendations of the committee.

I. Moderator's Address (GEN 01)

The governance and nominations committee commended the moderator for the report and for her dedicated work on behalf of the entire fellowship. The committee appreciated the reminder of the historical ecumenical legacy which invites us to stay together in both good times and also in difficult

times, such as the COVID-19 pandemic which has caused many injustices and increased the level of violence against vulnerable people, especially women. Thanks were expressed and the moderator was encouraged to continue her good work. The committee felt they were blessed to have her leadership.

II. Report of the Acting General Secretary (GEN 03)

The committee appreciated the report of the acting general secretary and his effort during the COVID-19 pandemic in keeping the fellowship together despite the restrictions on in-person meetings. The committee expressed gratitude for the diligent work, for keeping the central committee members informed through the monthly accountability reports, and for the effective leadership of the acting general secretary.

III. Report of the Executive Committee (GEN 02)

The committee received the report of the executive committee with appreciation for the work reported. The committee expressed the concern about the process of the election of a new general secretary and the members were reminded that the presentation of the search committee report and its reception by the central committee are integral to the process of the election of a general secretary. Concerns were also raised about the accessibility of vaccines to delegates from the global south for the next assembly.

IV. Nominations (GEN NOM 02rev)

The nominations before the committee included replacements on the central and executive committees as well as for some commissions and consultative bodies. It was noted that no nomination for the president from Africa was included in proposals. It was explained that the presidents shall be elected by the central committee according to WCC rules(V.7, 8) and that the executive committee considered that such an election would be too difficult for this first online meeting of the central committee.

The recommendation that

1. *The central committee **approve** the replacements for central committee and executive committee and **confirms** the nominations to other committees and consultative bodies.*

was approved by consensus.

V. Assembly Nominations (GEN NOM 03)

The committee considered the document on assembly nominations (GEN NOM 03) and its appendices. A revised version of GEN NOM 03 Appendix 1 Member Church Delegations was presented with some corrections. It was clarified that nominations are still being received from the churches and that churches still have a possibility to change the composition of their delegations.

A. Member church delegations (GEN NOM 03.1)

The committee received the further revised list of member church delegations with the advisors to the delegation[1] presented separately. The committee was informed of the churches who have not yet sent in their delegation lists. It was determined that names of 95 delegates are still to be received from 69 churches.

A number of committee members expressed disappointment about the percentage of women (31%), youth (8%), lay people (30.7%), indigenous people (8.4%) and persons with disabilities (1%) represented in delegations from the churches. Reference was made to the recommendation of the

[1] Advisors to the delegation have the right to speak in hearing sessions but not in decision sessions.

permanent committee on consensus and collaboration[2] for sending a reminder to the member churches to compose their delegations in a balanced manner. It was said that the church delegations should reflect the demographics of the faithful in the churches.

The committee agreed to ask the acting general secretary, in the post central committee letter to the churches, to thank the member churches for sending in their delegations and inform them of the numbers listed above which do not reach a commonly accepted 'fair and adequate representation' and those churches who have not yet sent in their delegations, to send them before November 2021.

The recommendations that

2. *The central committee **confirm** the delegates nominated by the member churches with appreciation (GEN NOM 03, Appendix 1 revised); and **refers** nominations, received after the central committee meeting from member churches who have not yet sent in their delegations, to the executive committee for action.*
3. *The central committee **ask** the acting general secretary, in the post central committee letter to the churches, to thank the member churches for sending in their delegations, inform them of the numbers listed above which do not reach a commonly accepted 'fair and adequate representation' and encourage those churches who have not yet sent in their delegations, to send them before November 2021.*

were approved by consensus.

B. Additional delegate nominations (GEN NOM 03.2)

The acting general secretary offered a proposal for the additional delegates which included names and the rationale for the selection. Prioritizing women, youth, indigenous peoples, lay people and people with disabilities, the committee proposed naming 104 additional delegates at this time.

The recommendations that

4. *The central committee **nominate** 104 additional delegates as delegates to the 11th Assembly (GEN NOM 03 Appendix 2 revised); and **refer** additional delegate suggestions received after the central committee meeting to the executive committee for action.*
5. *The central committee **ask** the acting general secretary to solicit additional delegate proposals from Orthodox member churches, particularly to increase participation of women, youth, lay people, indigenous people, and persons with disabilities.*

were approved by consensus.

C. Delegated representative nominations (GEN NOM 03.3)

Ecumenical partners who, according to the WCC constitution, are in working relationship with the WCC, are invited to send delegated representatives to participate in the assembly. They have the right to speak in hearing sessions but not in decisions sessions.

The recommendation that

6. *The central committee **receive** the delegated representatives nominated by ecumenical partners with appreciation (GEN NOM 03 Appendix 3); and **refer** nominations received after the central committee meeting to the executive committee for action.*

were approved by consensus.

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[2] Report of the Permanent Committee on Consensus and Collaboration Meeting, 6-9 April 2019 Balamand, Lebanon. 23. ...The PCCC urges that the letter remind churches with more than one representative to the central committee to make every effort to include on its assembly delegation, women and youth, and be prepared to agree to the formation of governing bodies that respect the balances identified as a priority by the fellowship by inclusion of these persons, if nominated.

D. Other invitations

The assembly also welcomes advisors to assist with the assembly programme; guests, interfaith guests and plenary speakers; and observers from non-member churches. According to the rules, these participants have the right to speak in hearing sessions but not in decisions session. It was also noted that outgoing central committee members may participate in the assembly with the right to speak in hearing sessions but not in decision sessions.

The recommendations that

7. *The central committee **authorize** the acting general secretary to develop a list of proposed advisors based on the needs of the assembly and in consultation with member churches for presentation to the next executive committee meeting for action.*
8. *The central committee **authorize** the acting general secretary to develop a list of guests, including interfaith guests, and plenary speakers for presentation to the next executive committee meeting for action.*
9. *The central committee **refer** delegated observer nominations to the next executive committee meeting for action.*

were approved by consensus.

The full report was adopted by consensus.

The committee, rapporteurs and members of the committee were thanked for the work, as well as Bishop Simo Peura for his leadership.

Dr Agnes Abuom thanked H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios for moderating the sessions on the standing committee reports and thanked the members for staying in the meeting longer than expected.

3.6. Dates of the Next Central Committee Meeting

Dr Abuom moderated a decision session.

The dates were resented as followed:

- Central Committee meeting 9-15 February 2022
    - Arrivals 8 February
    - Departures 16 February
- Executive Committee meeting 8 February with arrivals on 7 February

Dr Walker-Smith asked about the participation of those who might not be able to travel to an in-person meeting in Geneva. Dr Abuom responded that as the situation is evolving, this would be discussed at the November executive committee.

The dates were agreed by consensus.

The moderator encouraged the members to get vaccinated. The WCC secretariat will keep the central committee members informed about entry requirements for Switzerland as the situation develops.

3.7. Prayer

The concluding prayer for the meeting focused on Christ's love – The bond of Christian Unity and the Churches' Common Witness. Psalm 133 was read and the prayers were from the resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (2021 and 2017). Rev. Dr Elisabeth Krause-Vilmar (Evangelische

Kirche in Deutschland), moderator of the assembly worship planning committee, offered the reflection on Matthew 20:20-28.

As individual Christians, in our churches and as the WCC, we strive to serve a wounded world. She reflected on service, and particularly at what Jesus says about service in the Gospel according to Matthew. In response to the request that the sons of Zebedee sit on the right and left of Jesus, Jesus corrects them lovingly and resolutely. He directs their ambition and aspiration in the opposite direction. Instead of going up, one goes down. Instead of fame comes suffering. Instead of going to the surface, one goes deep. The antithesis to the society at that time as well as that of today cannot be expressed more strongly. Jesus opposes ruling, power and violence with service. Our life is fulfilled when we share it with others and serve others.

As individual Christians, in our churches and as the WCC, we strive to serve a wounded world. It is our calling to follow the way of Jesus, to become more and more like him, and to be a community marked by a different quality of relationships, of which people say: see how they share with one another, use their strength for others, love one another – and serve one another. We fall short of this aspiration when we serve on our own and with our own motives. But we come closer to fulfilling this when we ask God to transform everything we do so that it helps and serves others.

3.8. Expressions of Thanks and Closing

Dr Abuom expressed the gratitude of the leadership for the active participation of the central committee members, for the commitment and eagerness to see that we move together to ensure the assembly, as well as the leadership and vision of the Council.

She also thanked the following:

- The spiritual life team for the prayers; those who participated in the prayers through readings or offering a reflection, in plenary, regional group meetings and in the standing committees;
- The presidents and central committee members;
- The advisors from Christian world communions, specialized ministries and regional ecumenical organizations; the youth advisors;
- The advisors from applicant churches;
- The consensus consultant;
- The central committee recorders who ensured that the decisions were recorded correctly;
- The interpreters and translators;
- The acting general secretary and the staff leadership;
- The staff who have worked tirelessly to make this first online meeting successful, with special thanks to the technical team;
- The vice-moderators for the good cooperation and the sharing we have in discerning God's will in our leadership of this central committee.

She added her thanks to God for giving the central committee this time together. She said that each central committee member, each member church, each regional body, each communion is a very special partner in this journey.

Bishop Mary Ann Swenson offered an additional prayer for one of the staff members who heard that her brother had suddenly passed away.

The moderator officially closed the sixty-fifth meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches.